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No. 130.

## BABY BELLE.

BY MATTIE DYER BRITTS.

If you'll come into our cottage I will show you something rare,  
Never artist's cunning pencil traced a picture half so fair,  
Never poet dreamed a vision brighter than our darling's face,  
Every feature perfect beauty—every motion perfect grace!

And we love her, oh, we love her, more than ever words can tell,  
Little winsome, weesome fairy, bonny, blue-eyed Baby Belle!

Sitting on the cottage floor, playing with her tiny shoe,  
Little fingers fair and dimpled, arms and shoulders dimpled, too;  
Eyes as blue as summer blossoms, tiny teeth as white as pearls,  
And the golden sunlight gleaming on each brighter golden curl!

Don't you think we ought to love her more than ever words can tell,  
Little winsome, weesome angel, bonny, blue-eyed Baby Belle!

Kings may have their crowns and diamonds, and their robes of purple hue,  
Downy beds and sumptuous chambers—keep their wealth and welcome, too,  
We don't envy all their treasures while we have this little gem,  
Far more precious to our bosoms than their jewels are to them.

For we love her, yes, we love her, more than words can ever tell,  
Weesome, winsome, darling baby, bonny, blue-eyed Baby Belle!

We've no store of earthly treasure, we have neither lands nor gold—  
Yet our cottage holds one precious jewel worth a price untold.  
And we thank our Gracious Father that he trusted to our care  
Such a stainless little spirit, with an outward form so fair.

And we love her, oh, we love her, more than ever words can tell,  
Little winsome, weesome angel, bonny, blue-eyed Baby Belle!

Once, on earth, the Heavenly Master took such little ones as these,  
Held them to his tender bosom, set them kindly on his knees,  
And he spoke those words around him, in those gentle tones of His,  
"Bring such little ones unto me, for of such my kingdom is."

Ah, no wonder that we love her, more than words can ever tell,  
Jesus left a blessing for her! bonny, blue-eyed Baby Belle!

Once, on earth, the Heavenly Master took such little ones as these,  
Held them to his tender bosom, set them kindly on his knees,  
And he spoke those words around him, in those gentle tones of His,  
"Bring such little ones unto me, for of such my kingdom is."

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Ah, no wonder that we love her, more than words can ever tell,  
Jesus left a blessing for her! bonny, blue-eyed Baby Belle!

## The Wronged Heiress: OR, The Vultures of New York.

A WEIRD ROMANCE OF THE GREAT METROPOLIS.

BY RETT WINWOOD.

AUTHOR OF "THE WHITE SPECTER," "WHO WAS SHE?," "RAFFLES," "ON THE DECEASED PROPERTIES," "THE DANGEROUS WOMAN," "TWO LOVES," "MIRIAM BREYER'S SECRET," ETC.

### CHAPTER I.

THE STRANGE LETTER.

BREAKFAST was just over at Woodlawn, a handsome villa situated near Hoboken, only a few hundred yards from the banks of the North river.

The breakfast-room had not yet been deserted. Its occupants on this particular morning of which we write, were a gentleman and two ladies.

The gentleman is the master of the house—Jasper Laudersdale. He sits with yesterday's paper spread out on the table before him. He is a handsome, somewhat florid-looking man, of about fifty years of age.

His wife faces him at the table. Though nearly as old as her husband, she is still a rarely beautiful woman. Her lips may be a trifle too sharply cleft, her bright dark eyes a shade too keen and piercing, but every thing about this woman is in perfect harmony—even to the plain black silk mourning-dress she wears—and the effect, as a whole, is pleasing.

The third person who makes up this little party, is a young lady, and bears a striking resemblance to Mrs. Laudersdale. There is the same grace of movement, the same magnificent dark hair and eyes, the same sharply-cut lips. She is, in fact, Mrs. Laudersdale's daughter by a former husband—Miss Marcia Denvil.

Mr. Laudersdale seemed absorbed in his paper. Marcia and her mother were discussing a ball they had attended the evening before. Presently the door opened almost noiselessly, and a very meek-looking young woman entered the apartment.

This person was Jane Burt, Mrs. Laudersdale's confidential maid.

"Has the postman come?" said Mr. Laudersdale, looking up as she silently crossed the floor.

"Yes, sir."  
"Any letters?"  
Jane laid the morning papers on the table at her master's elbow.  
"Those are all, sir," she said, quietly.  
"There were no letters."



"Granny's dead!" she exclaimed; "and you, you," pointing at Mrs. Laudersdale, "have killed her!"

"I told master a lie," she said, at last.

"There is a letter."  
"For him?"  
"For him?"  
"Let me see it."

Jane put her hand in her apron-pocket and produced a letter, which she gave to Mrs. Laudersdale; then she drew back a step or two, and watched with unconcealed curiosity the effect it produced on her mistress.

Mrs. Laudersdale uttered an exclamation, and paled visibly as she looked at the letter. It was inclosed in a brown envelope, not over clean. The address was written in a tremulous, nearly illegible hand that seemed perfectly familiar to Mrs. Laudersdale.

"Good heavens!" she exclaimed, "what does this mean? Why is this letter addressed to him—to my husband?"

Jane smiled slightly. "That is precisely what I would like to know," she said.

"Hush!" Mrs. Laudersdale caught Jane almost fiercely by the arm. "Explain yourself," she hissed, "what do you see that is strange in this matter?"

"Those letters have frequently come to this house before now."

"Yes."  
"And they have, invariably, been addressed to yourself."

The two women eyed each other in silence. Mrs. Laudersdale's color had not come back, and she was even trembling.

Jane was the first to speak. "Now you know why I did not give that letter to master when he asked for the mail. I was not sure you would wish him to see it."

"You did right, Jane. He must know nothing of it."  
"Now, or ever?"  
"Now, or ever?"  
Mrs. Laudersdale struggled hard for her composure, and regained it.

"And you shall have every letter that comes to the house in that handwriting, no matter to whom it may be addressed."

"What do you know of those letters, Jane?"

"Nothing much. That they are post-marked Berlin, a village somewhere down on the Jersey coast. And that they are of signal interest to yourself."

She smiled quietly to herself as she answered.

"I should have been ruined if this letter had fallen into the hands of my husband," Mrs. Laudersdale exclaimed, with a sudden outburst of emotion.

"I suspected as much."

"You are a jewel, Jane!"

"I know how to butter my own bread," was the brutal reply.

Mrs. Laudersdale turned round with the letter pushed into the bosom of her dress, and was moving toward the staircase, when her quick eye caught sight of a man's dark, evil-looking face pushed in at a door near the lower end of the hall.

This man was Bill Cuppings, the groom, a person she had reason both to fear and dislike.

He was stealthily watching her. Mrs. Laudersdale paled again, and caught giddily at the balusters. But after a momentary hesitation, she passed on up the stairs, as if she had seen nobody.

pression changing as she read it. Her lips shut sharply together; her dark eyes shot forth sparks of fire; her bosom heaved; her face became the face of a beautiful fury.

The letter ran thus:

"JASPER LAUDERSDALE:—I have not long to live. But there's something weighing on my mind that I must tell you before I die. It's a secret that concerns yourself. I must see you! If you value your own happiness, don't disregard these lines, but come at once to Berlin, and ask for Granny Wells. Don't delay, or you'll be too late. And above all, don't say one word of this letter, or of your destination, to your wife. Come, come, come! Don't let me die with my sin unconfessed."

This was all. But the perusal of these lines had produced a fearful effect on Mrs. Laudersdale. She was fairly livid with passion.

"And so the old hag would have betrayed me," she panted. "Ah, just Heaven! it was a narrow escape. I must look to her. She shall not baffle me at this late stage in the game. No, no. And she must not be given the opportunity to send other messages. The risk is too great. I will go down to Berlin myself this very day, and—"

She did not finish the sentence, but the expression of her countenance as she crunched the letter up in her hand was terrible.

After a minute's thinking, she threw the paper on the table and passed into her bedroom, which opened from the dressing-room. Here she made some hasty changes in her toilet. They were scarcely completed when she heard a hurried movement in the room she had so recently quitted.

Looking eagerly for the letter she had so thoughtlessly thrown down, and finding it not, she darted to the door and flung it open.

A man stood by her toilet-table, leisurely smoothing the crumpled paper upon it.

She ran up to him, tore the letter from his hand, and made a thousand pieces of it. The daring intruder was Bill Cuppings, the groom.

"You here?" she snarled, facing him like some animal at bay.

He coolly regarded her.  
"Why not?" he asked.  
"This is my private room. How dare you cross the threshold?"

"I didn't cross the threshold," he replied, nodding his head in the direction of the open window. "Don't you see the balcony out yonder? That is the way I gained admittance to the room."

Of course it was. Mrs. Laudersdale remembered now that she had locked the door on coming in.

"Why are you here?" she asked, white with rage.

"I wanted to see what was in that letter you and Jane were so sly over. And I have succeeded!"

She dropped into a chair, actually gasping for breath. Cold beads of perspiration came out and stood upon her forehead. Bill Cuppings folded his arms and stood looking at her, with an ugly sneer curling his under lip.

"You don't do right in refusing me your confidence, Martha," he resumed, in a familiar way. "You compel me to hunt up your secrets for myself, and that isn't pleasant, besides causing a world of trouble. You and I have been engaged in too many questionable schemes to go back on each other now. It is too late in the day to trust me by halves."

Mrs. Laudersdale felt, in every shrinking nerve of her body, that he had spoken truly. "Yes, Bill," she said, after a short silence, "it is too late, and I will trust you. But not now. I haven't the time to tell you what that letter means to me. I expect soon to have need of your services; then you shall know all."

He looked at her half-distrustfully. "You are going to Berlin?" he asked.

"Yes."  
"Who goes with you?"  
"I had thought to go alone. But I believe I will take Jane."

"Humph! You might as well. I will wait here for your return. If you are not perfectly candid with me then, I shall go down to Berlin on my own hook. And, in that case, I may be tempted to inform master of the discoveries I make."

The wicked woman bore his gaze unshrinkingly. "There will be no necessity for that," she said, in a calm, cool tone of voice. "I think you and I understand each other, Bill."

"I think we do," he returned, significantly.

"Go, now, before anybody comes to find you here."

He laughed jeeringly. "It wouldn't be pleasant to have it known that I have the audacity to visit my mistress's dressing-room, and read her private correspondence—or, worse still, the confiscated letters addressed to her husband."

Mrs. Laudersdale disdained to reply to the sneer conveyed in these words. Perhaps she feared to exasperate the man.

Cuppings stood regarding her a moment longer, an assured smile still playing about his lips. Then he turned, vaulted over the window-ledge, and disappeared on the balcony that ran along that side of the house.

When she had taken time fully to regain her composure, Mrs. Laudersdale rung the bell for Jane.

"I am compelled to take a sudden journey," she said, when the maid put in an appearance. "You are to accompany me. Dress yourself as quickly as possible."

Jane smiled, knowingly. "Does master know of this?" she asked.

"No. I shall tell him we are going to spend the night with a friend in the city. Take nothing along. We must not arouse his suspicions."

"Are we going to Berlin?"  
"We are going to Berlin."  
"Ah," said Jane, "I see."

### CHAPTER II.

WHAT HAPPENED AT BERLIN.

It was already dark when Mrs. Laudersdale, accompanied by her maid, reached her destination.

On the way from New York she had confided to the faithful but unscrupulous Jane as many as she dared of her reasons for taking this sudden journey to Berlin.

The night was bright with starlight when the two women wended their way upward from the low-browed inn squatted on the bleak Jersey shore, where the stage-coach had left them.

Before them, as they hurried on, the night seemed to drop down curtain after curtain of opaque darkness, through which all material objects looked ghastly and spectral; at no great distance the worn and haggard tide came tramping in with a low but thunderous tread.

However, Mrs. Laudersdale took no notice of external objects. Keeping fast hold of Jane's hand, she hurried onward through the darkness with a fierce, almost manlike stride that plainly betrayed the intensely excited state of her mind.

"Good God!" she muttered, between her shut teeth. "Granny Wells may already have told my secret to that pink-faced girl! She may have told it to others!"

"To what girl do you refer?" asked Jane, not a little surprised. "You have told me of none."

"I had reference to the old woman's grand-daughter, Mabel Trevor," replied Mrs. Laudersdale, though not without a show of hesitation.

Jane merely gave utterance to an expressive "Humph!"

"There's the house," said Mrs. Laudersdale, presently, pointing out a gleam of



light faintly perceptible through the furzy bushes that now obstructed their way. "Keep your eyes about you, Jane. There's no telling to what desperate measures the old hag may not drive us."

They approached the hovel—for it was scarcely more than that—and Mrs. Landersdale, who seemed perfectly familiar with the premises, pushed open the door without the slightest hesitation.

The next instant the two women found themselves in a miserable little room furnished with a pallet-bed, a deal table, and some dilapidated chairs.

Upon the bed a wretched old woman was lying—a horribly ghastly skeleton, with a skin yellow as parchment, sunken, lusterless eyes, bloodless lips, and a mass of gray, unkempt hair flooding the pillow.

The clammy dampness of approaching dissolution was already gathering on the brow of the pitiable creature.

On the hard floor by the bedside knelt a young girl of some seventeen years of age, who was such a miracle of grace and beauty as to seem strangely out of place in that miserable hole.

She had a sweet, star-like face, with a skin like wax in its creamy whiteness, eyes blue as a fluted gentian growing on some shady bank, lips tinged of a sumptuous carmine, and a profusion of silky hair that fell away from her brow to roll over her alabaster shoulders in a torrent of dull, dead gold.

Of course this was the girl to whom Mrs. Landersdale had referred, when she spoke of Mabel Trevor.

She started quickly to her feet, a flush of surprise overspreading her lovely face as the intruders burst so unceremoniously into the hut.

Their appearance had a still more startling effect on the old woman. She suddenly raised herself from the pillow, and fixing her filmy eyes on Mrs. Landersdale's face, screamed out, in a loud, shrill voice:

"Woman! fiend! why are you here?"

"Hush!" said Mrs. Landersdale, sternly, as she approached the bed. "I came to see you."

"A singular change swept over the features of the poor, dying wretch. She fell back on the pillow again. "It was Jasper Landersdale I wanted to see," she moaned.

"Not you—not you!"

"I know that very well."

"I sent him a letter. Devil, temptress, you didn't dare—"

"He never received that letter!" interrupted Mrs. Landersdale, coolly, after having glanced searchingly round the apartment to make sure that nobody was present save the girl and Jane.

"Oh, God forgive me!"

"You intended to betray me, Granny Wells. You would have told my husband every thing. With one word you would have destroyed the cherished scheme of years."

"Yes," said the old woman, "I would have told him every thing. I've been wicked, wicked. And you, fiend that you are, shaking her skinny fist in Mrs. Landersdale's face, 'have been my evil genius. You've tempted me to do wrong when I wouldn't have thought of such a thing but for you. Oh, let me atone, for God's sake let me atone, so far as is in my power, before I die!'"

Mrs. Landersdale put her lips close to the ear of the dying sinner. "What do you mean by that word 'atone'?" she whispered.

"How would you atone?"

"By telling your husband the truth, as I said afore. And by lettin' Mabel know just who and what she be."

"Does she not know already?"

"No. I felt tempted to tell her. But it seemed best to wait until he, Jasper Landersdale, was here. And I waited."

Her listener lowered the lids of her cunning eyes to conceal the gleam of triumph and relief that came into them.

"It is well," she said.

"I shall tell her now!" cried out Granny Wells, in a loud, shrill tone of voice. "I'm dying. And I ain't going to the other world with that sin unconfessed!"

Mrs. Landersdale seemed to consider for a moment. She realized the full extent of the danger that threatened herself, and the success of her most cherished schemes if Granny Wells was permitted to make known to Mabel Trevor the guilty secret that lay between them. But not a muscle of her face moved to betray the dark thoughts that were passing in her mind.

"Yes, it is best that Mabel should know every thing," she said, presently, in a voice audible only to the dying woman. "I give up the game. But, before you make a confession, I have something to say to you. Send the girl away for a few minutes."

Granny Wells looked distrustfully into the face which was bent so near to her own. It looked calm, imperturbable, almost indifferent. Her doubts seemed to vanish in a moment.

"Mabel may leave us alone," she said, wearily.

Mrs. Landersdale communicated the permission to the girl herself, who stood at a little distance, regarding them with wondering looks. She instantly came a step or two nearer the bed.

"Do you really wish me to go away for a few minutes, Granny?" she said.

The old woman nodded her head.

She sighed, and seemed unwilling to stir.

"I shall not go far," she said, at last, giving Mrs. Landersdale a significant and distrustful glance.

She then threw a shawl over her head, reluctantly approached the door, and went out into the clear, starlight night.

For some seconds after her departure not a word was spoken in the hovel. Mrs. Landersdale sat by the bedside, her face showing ghastly pale in the feeble light afforded by the sputtering tallow candle on the table. The corners of her mouth twitched nervously, in spite of all her efforts at self-control.

"Speak out," said Granny Wells, at last.

"What do you want to say to me?"

Mrs. Landersdale rose up slowly, and moved to the foot of the bed where Jane was standing, the picture of stolid indifference. "Don't fail me now," she said, in a sharp whisper.

"I had no thought of failing you," muttered Jane, in response.

The guilty woman drew near the bedside once more. "I deceived you just now," she said, sullenly. "I never meant to give my consent that the confession should be made. Fool, do you think I would have taken this journey here had I been so indifferent as that? No, no. And it was to tell you this that I had Mabel sent from the house."

Granny Wells threw up both her arms with a frightened moan.

"Treachery, treachery!"

"Call it what you will. The name does not matter to me. But I could not have my secret proclaimed after all those weary years of struggling to keep it. I tell you that I could not."

"Call Mabel back—call the girl back!" cried the unhappy woman. "No matter what it may cost you, I can't die until she knows the truth."

Mrs. Landersdale wildly wrung her hands. "I am lost, ruined, if you tell."

"I must tell."

"You shall not," and she threw herself on the couch beside the dying woman. "You shall not!" she hissed, between her clenched teeth. "I'll strangle you sooner. I'll take the miserable remnant of life that is left in your still more miserable body."

"Off, off! I can't die—I won't die without telling."

"Would you drive me desperate?"

Her beautiful ringed hands clutched fiercely at Granny Wells' throat. She looked like some furious tiger-cat springing upon its victim with all its claws spread out. Her breath came and went in short, quick gasps, her bosom heaved, her dark eyes shot forth sparks of fire.

"Woman!" she hissed, "you shall never live to bring ruin and disgrace upon me!"

"Murder! Mer—"

The shrill, frightened cry was stifled almost at its birth by those white fingers encircling the unhappy woman's throat.

"Quick!" cried Mrs. Landersdale. "The door, Jane. Hold the door."

The maid sprung forward, dropped her hand over the latch, and with all her strength held it in place so that it would be impossible for any one to raise it from within.

Mrs. Landersdale's murderous grasp on Granny Wells' throat tightened more and more.

At that moment she only thought of the fearful consequences to herself if the dying woman was permitted to tell her story.

Ruin, disgrace, loss of position, the world's scorn, with the finger of contempt directed at her.

The result of the struggle meant all that to her. It is not strange that, for the moment, she was little better than a mad woman.

Such a contest could not last many seconds. The guilty woman's victim grew purple in the face, there was a strange and horrible contraction of the muscles, a long, gasping sigh, and then all was still.

Mrs. Landersdale staggered to her feet, trembling in every limb.

"She's dead," she muttered, putting up both her hands as if to shut out the horrible sight.

Jane had managed to secure the latch of the door with a nail which she had broken off from the wall where it was driven. She now sprang to the bed, and hurriedly removed all signs of the struggle that had just taken place.

"Compose yourself," she cried, in a stern whisper, "compose yourself, or all is lost."

Thus exhorted, Mrs. Landersdale dropped into the nearest chair, and after one or two ineffectual efforts, succeeded in controlling the violent trembling that had seized upon every limb.

Not an instant too soon, however. A step was heard outside, a hand laid on the latch, and the door was violently shaken.

"Why have you fastened me out?" cried the sweet, half-frightened voice of Mabel Trevor. "Quick, quick! Open the door to me."

Jane drew out the nail, and flung it from her. Then she lifted the latch. "The door must have stuck," she muttered. "Come in quick, Miss. I fear the old woman is dead."

Mabel entered the hut, looking very pale and evidently laboring under some strong excitement. She went straight up to the bed, until her gaze fell upon the still but ghastly countenance of the woman lying there.

"Granny's dead!" she exclaimed; then, in a loud, scared voice, "and you, you," turning suddenly upon Mrs. Landersdale, "have killed her!"

The guilty creature could not utter one word of denial. The suddenness of the accusation seemed to paralyze her.

"You have killed her," Mabel repeated, wildly. "Oh, fool that I was to trust her alone with you!"

Jane came to the rescue of her mistress.

"You'd better keep a civil tongue in your head, Miss," she said, sullenly. "I don't listen to such talk as that when addressed to my mistress. The poor lady was trying to tell something or other, and just gave a gasp of a sudden, and so died. That's the long and the short of the matter."

"I heard her cry out."

"Very likely you did. Dying folks are noted for screeching."

"I heard her cry murder," said Mabel, still glancing distrustfully from one to the other of the strange women.

"Bah! That was all imagination. You heard nothing of the sort."

"The door was held open."

"It stuck fast, that is all."

Jane's answers had all been given with a pert readiness that might well have deceived a much shrewder observer than Mabel Trevor. But that young lady was far from being convinced that every thing was as it should be.

"There is some secret which you are trying to hide from me," she exclaimed, almost wildly; "and it is a secret which burdened that poor dead woman's conscience, and which she was anxious to tell. You are making me the victim of some foul wrong or other."

Mrs. Landersdale now roused herself and looked at the girl anxiously. "Who is?" she asked.

"You, Mrs. Jasper Landersdale."

The guilty woman started out of her chair. "Ha! do you know me?"

"As an enemy—yes," she snarled, grinding her white teeth viciously.

Granny Wells was no kin of mine. I have every reason to believe that you, to serve some nefarious purpose of your own, gave me into her keeping as a child. And I also know that your husband, if I could once gain speech with him, would befriend me."

"Who told you such a falsehood?"

"Granny Wells, not an hour since."

Mrs. Landersdale's fingers twitched convulsively. She was advancing toward the helpless girl, much as a tiger-cat steals upon its prey, when Jane stretched forth her trembling hand and laid it on the woman's arm.

"Have a care," she whispered, "with her lips close to her mistress' ear. 'You shall

not kill her! You've done devil's work enough for one night. Come away."

Mrs. Landersdale suffered Jane to lead her to the door of the hovel. On the threshold, the latter paused to look back and speak a last word.

"You are very unjust to my mistress," she said. "I think you will learn your mistake some day, Miss, and come to regret it. Under existing circumstances, of course it cannot be pleasant to my lady or yourself for us to remain longer under this roof. We go to the inn down on the beach, and will send back help to look after the dead."

Mabel had flung herself in a chair by the bedside. "You need not trouble yourself," she said, wearily. "Some of the neighbors have promised to come in to watch with me. They must be here pretty soon, and I am not afraid."

"Hum! Good-night, Miss."

The door closed, and Jane and her mistress walked rapidly away in the darkness.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE LONE HOUSE IN THE WOOD.

THREE DAYS subsequent to her sudden death, Granny Wells was buried.

During the interim Mabel Trevor remained quietly at the hovel, accepting with a grateful heart the rough, but kindly-meant, attentions of her neighbors.

She was shrewd enough to keep to herself the suspicion that Granny Wells had been helped out of the world. The ignorant fishermen noticed nothing peculiar in the appearance of the dead; they would have pronounced Mabel to be unsettled in her mind if she had even hinted the horrible thoughts that were continually distressing her.

Unfortunately for Mabel, nobody had seen Mrs. Landersdale and Jane enter or leave the hut. She could not prove that they had been there at all.

Nevertheless, she had secretly made up her mind to follow them to their home at the earliest practicable moment, charge them with having listened to the old woman's exit from the world, and by this means, perhaps, wrest from Mrs. Landersdale the secret that seemed so intimately to concern her self.

That wicked woman evidently knew the true story of her birth, and she felt that she could not rest until it had been forced from her guilty lips.

As a guide to her future movements, she merely knew that Mrs. Landersdale resided at a country-seat called the Woodlawn, near Hoboken.

It should be her first duty to find Woodlawn.

She waited until the wretched old woman who was the only friend she had ever known in the world, had been consigned to the grave, before attempting to put her design into execution.

The simple funeral took place at twelve o'clock. After the last of her humble neighbors had left the house, Mabel hastily equipped herself for the journey to New York.

It was several miles to the nearest railway station, and the only stage connecting with it left at an early hour of the morning. Rather than remain another night at the wretched hovel, Mabel determined to mount the only horse that Granny Wells had possessed, and so reach the station in that manner.

She had money enough to take her to New York, and support herself there in very humble lodgings for several weeks.

It was mid-afternoon when she locked the door of the hut and mounted the gray mare that was to convey her over the first stage of her journey.

The hot, stifling air was full of summer scents and sounds, as she rode along the pleasant country road. After the lapse of an hour or two, she suddenly became aware that a man was following her.

He, too, was on horseback. From the occasional glimpses she caught of his figure he seemed to be a stout, heavily-built fellow; but he kept too far in the rear for her to distinguish his features.

Why was he following her?

She could not doubt but that she was really the object of his pursuit. If she whipped up the gray mare and sought to elude him in that way, he worried his own beast into a gallop; or if she suffered the mare to walk, he copied her example even there, and always maintained the same distance between them—never lessening it, and never suffering it to widen.

She grew nervous and frightened at last, at being followed so persistently. She might have stopped at one of the many farm-houses on the road, and got rid of him in this manner, but her overweening desire to reach New York at the earliest practicable moment prevented her from doing any thing of the sort.

The way grew lonelier and wilder, and the sun dropped low in the western heaven. Mabel presently reached two cross-roads, where she paused in some perplexity, not knowing which of the two to take.

Finally selecting that leading to the right, she hurried on. Looking back after the lapse of some fifteen or twenty minutes, she observed that her unknown pursuer had chosen the same road, and was now slowly gaining upon her.

She whipped up her mare, wishing, now that it was too late, that she had been less daring. Swiftly she sped along the uneven ground for some distance, but was suddenly compelled to draw rein on the bank of a river; for the bridge was gone.

There had been a heavy rain the night before, and the stream looked sullen and turgid.

Could she ford it?

It looked like a dangerous undertaking. While she hesitated there came a clattering of hoofs close behind her, and a hand was suddenly stretched toward her horse's head, and a gruff voice said:

"Good-evening, Miss."

Her heart bounded violently. She turned and looked at the man, knowing well he was the same who had been following her so long.

He was a powerful fellow, with a dark, evil-looking face, the nose long and sharp, and of a vulture-like curve, the eyebrows thin and bristling, the dark eyes sinister in their expression, and the narrow chin protruding in a very disagreeable manner.

In short, he was just the sort of person a defenseless man or woman would shrink from meeting in a lonely place.

Though Mabel's blood ran cold in her veins, she managed to maintain her self-possession.

"Good-evening, sir," she returned, civilly, in answer to his salutation.

"Are you going to cross the river?" he

asked, still keeping his hand on her bridle-rein.

"I am."

"It is dangerous to cross at this point. I hurried on to tell you so. There is quite an undertow when the river is swollen so much as at present."

"What am I to do?" she asked, helplessly.

"There's a bridge just below," he said, fixing his strange eyes upon her face.

"I don't know where to find it."

"I will guide you. It is only a little way."

"That bridge may be gone, too," she cried, sharply. "The freshest may have taken it away."

"Of course; but I hardly think it is. Come along. I'm going that way myself."

He turned her horse's head, even as he spoke, and began to lead the way along the bank of the river. Mabel had no time for remonstrance. It would not have availed her, perhaps, in any event.

The rosy flush of sunset faded from the sky, as they proceeded, and the purple shadows of twilight began to gather darkly around them.

Mabel fell back with terror; but the man's grasp was still on the bridle-rein, and she could not hope to break away from him. He had been very civil, thus far, but she could not help distrusting him.

If he meant mischief, the place was lonely and wild, and he must have every thing his own way.

He scarcely spoke. At last they reached the bridge of which mention had been made. And there he paused and looked at her keenly by the last glimmering light of day.

"The woods on the other side are dark and lonely," Miss," he said. "We must keep together, or you will surely lose your way."

"I would rather go back," she returned, shivering, as she glanced into the black depths of shade that seemed to be opening before them.

"Humph. You would gain nothing. There are woods on either hand, as you can see for yourself."

She clasped her hands in dread unutterable.

"Oh, I wish I hadn't come," she murmured.

"Let go your rein," he said, gruffly. "The way is narrow and dark. I'll lead you."

There seemed no other way than to submit. They resumed their journey. The woods grew darker and more impenetrable as they advanced. Great trees closed thickly about them. Poor Mabel could scarcely see her hand before her.

The man pushed on in sullen silence, leading the gray mare by the bridle. At last he emerged into a small clearing, and much to her delight, the frightened girl beheld dimly through the dark, a long, low building, the sides of which were pierced with several small windows.

"Here," she thought, "I may find friends and a refuge."

The building looked solitary and dark, however, as they drew near.

"Dismount!" said the man, in a stern voice, as they drew up before the door.

All hope died in her heart as she noticed his tone and manner. Trembling in every limb, she slid to the ground. Seizing firmly hold of her hand, he led her into the house, leaving the horses to graze at will on the diminutive lawn.

Within, every thing was wrapped in impenetrable darkness. The man hastily struck a match, and, like one perfectly familiar with the premises, approached a rude sort of chimney-piece, where he found a candle, which he lighted.

By the aid of its friendly rays, Mabel saw that she was in a small, smoke-begrimed apartment, very rudely furnished.

She looked eagerly at her companion.

"Do you live here?" she asked.

"No," he returned, with a strange smile. "I live in the suburbs of New York. But I have frequently been to this place before."

"In New York?" she echoed. "I am going there."

"Indeed?" Again that singular smile curled his lips. "May I ask what takes you to the city?"

"I go there to find a wicked woman who knows some secret concerning me that I am anxious she should divulge."

"You mean Mrs. Landersdale?"

Mabel gave a start of surprise.

"Do you know her?" she exclaimed.

"Yes. And I also know that she does not wish you to come to Woodlawn."

There was no mistaking the sneering tone in which these words were uttered. A sudden suspicion flashed with lightning-like rapidity upon Mabel's mind.

"Who are you?" she cried, sharply.

"Why have you dogged my footsteps all the way from Berlin?"

"One question" at a time, Miss, if you please. My name is Bill Cuppings. I live at Woodlawn."

It was indeed that strange and terrible man who had been leagued with Mrs. Landersdale in so many crimes that had never come to the light of day.

Mabel's heart died within her. This man could have had but one object in following her so persistently, and in conducting her to this lonely spot. His very next words verified the horrible suspicion that had crossed her mind.

"You are in Mrs. Landersdale's way," he said, brutally. "In short, you have it in your power to cause her no end of trouble. Like a clever woman—and my mistress is remarkably clever where her own interests are concerned—she determined, shortly after returning from her recent visit to Berlin, to put you out of the way of harassing her. Not to put too fine a point on it, you know too much for her safety."

"Oh, just Heaven!"

"As I said before, she wishes to be rid of you. And I am selected as the humble instrument to accomplish her purpose."

Mabel recoiled from him in horror.

"You would not murder me?" she cried.

"Bah! I've cut prettier throats than yours in my day," sneered the ruffian.

"I never harmed you."

"That is true. But it is as a mere business transaction that I regard this matter. My mistress hired me to do a certain piece of work, and I am bound to do it."

"She hired you to kill me?"

"You have said it," sneered the ruffian. "It isn't the first transaction of the sort I've been engaged in for her sweet sake."

Mabel threw up her clasped hands in a gesture of piteous entreaty.

"Have you no mercy?" she moaned. "I am young, and life is sweet. It is very hard to die."

Bill did not seem to be touched in the least by her misery.

"I'd like to spare you," he said, cool



the madness in her own breast, failed to notice the stern pallor on her father's features, or the cold, steeled gleam of the bright, pitiless eyes.

"Ida! what does this mean?"

"Ida!" cried Florence, passionately. "I am not 'Ida.' Who has done this thing, this accursed thing? Who dared do it?"

A low, unmusical laugh issued from Isabel's mouth.

"Do what, child? Besides, I am in a hurry for you to eat; I shall discharge Mary, and take you on my tour to England in her place, as lady's maid."

"England! lady's maid!" surely I am in some horrid nightmare! Wake me! wake me! or I shall die from fright!"

"Nonsense, Ida! Eat your dinner."

"I will not eat! I will starve myself to death first!"

"No, you won't. Listen, while I tell you what I shall do—what you shall do."

Isabel sat down on the side of the bed; her face still wearing that merciless look it had taken when Gussie Palliser had revealed Ellis Dorrance's treachery.

"I shall not call you Ida during this interview, because no one knows better than I that you are really Florence Arbuthnot. There—sit quietly down while I finish my story."

"A week or less ago, Dorrance came to me and arranged for Ida Greenwell, an heiress, who was to be 'put out of the way,' to come here, and be 'closely guarded' by me, the only one, besides Jim Palmer, his valet, who knows the secret."

"Trusting him as I ever had done, I believed his story; never dreaming he loved you, too, until I saw how very pretty you were, and then I suspected at once. He denied any regard for you, as you have done for him; but he lied, for another of his sweetest lies came to me, urged by her jealous espionage, and laid bare his treacherous blackness of heart. You may think I was wild to believe her, a perfect stranger, but, mind you, I had been led to doubt him the moment I saw you."

"Well, Florence Arbuthnot, you shall not impose upon me. You have endeavored to make me think you don't care for him; you pretend—and I know by his instructions—you fear him; and I am going to do just the very worst thing I can do. I am going to take you at your word."

"You were as beautiful a girl as ever I saw when you entered the Haunted House last night; but Ellis Dorrance will not be so proud of you when he sees you again. I have sworn to revenge myself on him, and because I hate you on his account, I shall use you to accomplish my ends. See there!"

She suddenly thrust a hand-mirror before Florence's eyes. A wild peal of terror fell from her lips as the reflection met her gaze.

"Have pity on me! I will swear by all that is sacred on earth and in heaven that I despise Ellis Dorrance more than you do! I swear to you on my knees that I am engaged to marry another—Mr. Arch Chessom, who lives near Beechcrest. Send to him; oh, let Mary go bring him, and he will give you all the money you want for me! Believe me—pray, pray, believe me!"

Isabel smiled grimly.

"Believe you, well, perhaps I do, but it's all the same. He is false to me, and I am resolved to strike a blow home to him, while I have the opportunity."

"Think how you loved him, and remember I love Mr. Chessom just as well! Please send for him, and he can tell you how I fear and hate Mr. Dorrance."

"I am not acquainted with this Mr. Chessom; why should I be, when I have only been a week in this locality? I only came when he telegraphed me that he wanted me, the Haunted House is only occupied a few weeks in the shooting season, when he brings his friends out. If it will gratify you to know where we are, yonder is Beechcrest, three miles distant. The nearest house is a very elegant one they call some one's 'Pride.'"

Florence sprang to the window; truly the tower of Chessom's Pride was not a mile off.

"And it is Arch's home! I must go from here. I will go!"

"I shall be sure to use force to subdue you. The whole story lies, in a word, namely: that I know you never again as Florence; from this moment you are Ida, my quadroon servant girl. To-morrow we leave this house by carriage to New York, to take the first English steamer. Attempt to disobey my instructions, and believe me, I will not hesitate to kill you—not to bring trouble to myself, mind you—but there are poisons, and poisonous inhalations, and wealous Italian often use them, accidentally, you know. They leave no trace behind!"

Florence shuddered at the low, horrible tone, so musical in its fearful earnestness.

What could she do? a prisoner and threatened with death if she dared disobey! There was no possible choice; life was very precious, and there remained a chance of escape in New York, where she would tell her story to the first man she saw on the streets—It might be Arch.

Isabel seemed to fathom her very thoughts, for she said:

"Telling your story will be useless, for I shall take good care to spread the report wherever I go, that you are an intelligent, harmless lunatic; those vagaries alter; the present being that you are a certain Miss Arbuthnot; and, remember, even your own mother would not know you."

Poor Florence! the darkness was very dense around her.

## CHAPTER IX.

## THE ALARM.

Mr. and Mrs. Arbuthnot had returned from their friendly vigil several hours earlier than they expected; and, anxious as was the lady to congratulate Florence on her engagement with Ellis Dorrance, she did not disturb that young lady's slumbers; deciding that undue haste might strengthen the suspicions already strong as death.

Breakfast was just over, and still Florence had not come down, when Ellis Dorrance was announced.

He was very stern, almost angry in his demeanor.

"Mr. Arbuthnot, madame, I have intruded thus early to demand the reason of my fruitless waiting last night. I spent an hour in the parlor without seeing your daughter. May I beg an interview this morning?"

Mrs. Arbuthnot rose from her chair in speechless wonder.

"Not see her?" echoed her husband, in a bewildered way. "Why didn't you see her?"

"That is the question I came to have answered."

"Not see her!" repeated Mrs. Arbuthnot. "That is strange! I will summon her down at once. No, I will go myself to her room."

She walked quickly up the stairs, and tapped on the door of Florence's apartment. Only perfect silence answered her; she rapped more loudly, and a little impatiently; then called:

"Florence, never mind if you're not dressed. I wish to come in."

She waited a second, then opened the door, partly vexed, partly surprised at the long delay.

A cry burst from her lips as she saw the bed had been unused; the square, ruffled pillows where they had lain in smooth state all the preceding day.

Then she glanced anxiously around the room, and saw the note.

She clutched it eagerly, and read it through, a red, intense flame seeming to come from her eyes, and a gray, deathly paleness creeping around her lips.

With no audible word she turned and went down-stairs, and silently laid the paper before the two men.

Arbuthnot snatched it, and read it aloud.

"The deuce! the—the—what does it mean, anyhow? Dorrance, look at that!"

Ellis took it, and then laid it down again, as he spoke:

"This is what I have feared, expected—'Heavens, man! how can you stand still there, knowing she has gone, with that rascal I hate above ground? How can you coolly say you 'feared' and 'expected'? Why don't you start off, post-haste, and find 'em'? If I catch him, the villain!"

Mrs. Arbuthnot stood, still pallid and trembling, by the hastily-vacated breakfast-table.

"Pursuit will be useless, I fear," she said, at length. "But—Arbuthnot, go at once to Chessom's Pride, and acquaint the family. Possibly they may have heard him mention where he was going."

Her eyes glittered coldly as she gave her directions.

"What will be the good?" asked Dorrance, gloomily. "They are married, doubtless, ere this, and he can protect his wife. If they are not—well, I'm sure I shouldn't care to—"

"Hold on!" shouted Arbuthnot, hotly. "Look out what you say about that girl! She is as good and pure as the falling snow, whatever she does."

"I'll remember, sir. Also, allow me to jog your memory regarding the fact of your sworn oath that she should be mine. How am I to look upon that now?"

There was coming a dangerous light in Dorrance's eyes, a certain expression that Mr. Arbuthnot never liked, and he paled under it.

"How could I keep it, Ellis? Haven't I worked for you to the best of my ability? And now, when she has fooled you as well as me, am I to blame?"

"I think so, a father should have taken better care of his only daughter."

Arbuthnot reddened angrily.

"Be careful, Ellis, how you speak. Remember it is not too late yet—to you know what. Besides, you can't afford to give her up yet. If you lose her, after all these years, it's a loss, a very serious loss, that we never had undertaken the game."

"Mr. Arbuthnot, we will not discuss that point; it was settled when she was a child that I was to have her, to end the little difficulty I got into. We will still adhere to that opinion; I will go on a tour of discovery myself—by-the-by, she is under age!"

Mr. Arbuthnot's face lightened as he replied:

"I had forgotten that. Yes, she can be brought home, and Ellis, the very best thing you can do is to start right off. Don't forget the interest you have at stake."

He spoke in a confidential, meaning voice.

"I'm off, then."

Dorrance bowed to the two, and hastened off, a smile of utter triumph on his face as he went through the streets. Mr. Arbuthnot went out immediately after, direct to Chessom's Pride.

Beautifully fair it was in the early morning sunshine, its inmates all unconscious of the storm about to break upon their heads.

Arch was preparing to ride to the village, to learn why Florence had not written to him; he had fully resolved to go to her home and demand an interview, when Mr. Arbuthnot was shown into the morning breakfast-room, where the family had not as yet assembled. Arch was astonished, yet extended his hand with easy cordiality.

"Mr. Arbuthnot, I am glad to see you. Will you take a chair? Have you breakfasted?"

But the man refused the offered hand, with hot anger in his face.

"Don't insult me! I demand to know where she is; where have you left her, since I am astounded at seeing you here?"

"Where is who—you can mean but one, and that is your daughter. Do you not know yourself, sir?"

Consternation and alarm were visible on Chessom's face, and he searchingly scanned the man's countenance.

"Do I know?" he repeated, bitterly. "I wish to Heaven I did know! And you have the impudence to ask me such a question. Answer me, at once, where have you taken my girl?"

"I have not seen her for a fortnight. I don't know what you mean, unless—God forbid!—danger has come to her through that black-hearted scoundrel, Dorrance!"

Arbuthnot reddened.

"A scoundrel, eh? Not half so much as yourself! But all I want to know is, where's Florence? I will have an answer, or you shall be arrested within an hour!"

Arch paled; it was a stinging insult; but his alarm for Florence overpowered all other feelings.

"Mr. Arbuthnot, I wish I knew. Until this moment I supposed she was at home."

Mr. Arbuthnot handed him the forged letter.

"I am as truly wounded and enraged as you can be, sir, for I love Florence dearly. But all I can say I have said; all I can do shall be done to find her."

There was excitement in Arch Chessom's handsome face, that only the more convinced Mr. Arbuthnot of his guilt; and then, when Arch bade him good-morning and begged to be excused, so keen was his alarm on Florence's part, Mr. Arbuthnot's wrath was greater than before.

"You refuse to tell me, sir; you request me to go home; but all of this can't convince me you are not the greatest rogue out of jail."

And he went out, trembling in his vexatiousness.

## CHAPTER X.

## FROM HYENA TO HAWK.

AFTER Isabel Lefevre had so cruelly made known her intentions to Florence, she left her alone to complete the preparations for her hastily decided trip to England.

Had it been possible, Isabel would not have gone that day, for two reasons. One of which was, she desired to see Gussie Palliser again; the other, a burning disposition to hurl Ellis Dorrance's rudeness in his face.

So she packed her trunks, sent Mary with a message to Lakewick for Gussie Palliser to call next noon, and then waited for the interview with Dorrance.

Once before dusk she went up to Florence, and left a light, with her supper.

Slowly the evening passed away to the terrified girl, and when the distant clock at Beechcrest struck out nine slow, distinct strokes, it seemed to her a very death-knell.

She dared not sleep; she dared not partake of the food Isabel had left her; so she sat by the high window looking down on the soft twinkling lights of Beechcrest, wondering whether all hope and joy and happiness was over for her forever.

Utter misery was in possession of her heart, as she glanced, shivering, over the repulsive disguise Isabel had wrought, and thought how her way was hedged closely up. Yet she resolved to proclaim the truth in New York city, let the consequences be what they might.

Suddenly a slight noise smote her ear. Then a low, cautious rap, on her door was followed by the pronouncing of her name, in a strange, kindly voice.

"Miss Arbuthnot! Miss Florence!"

She sprang to her feet in a sudden delirium of hope.

"Come in! I am unable to open the door. But come in and save me, I pray."

I have come to save you, Miss Florence. I am your friend, and Mr. Chessom's. He discovered your whereabouts and sent me to rescue you. The carriage waits just below the house."

"God bless you! I am all ready—but how can I come out? Can't you break the door?"

"I can, but the noise will reach Miss Lefevre's ears. Is there no way to come out? No window opening on a balcony?"

Florence eagerly examined the windows. There was none, and in returning despair, she felt the tears springing to her eyes.

"I see no way," she said presently, plaintively, "and if you saw me, you might not know me, for I am dressed in most horrible clothes, and the Italian woman has colored my skin brown."

An indignant cry fell from the stranger's lips.

"How dare she! never fear, Miss Florence, but that I'll know you; your voice is natural, at least."

Then after a moment's silence, he suddenly exclaimed:

"The ventilator, over the door! You can climb up by the table—have you one? or the bureau or a washstand; you can creep through, and I will catch you."

Alive only to the one absorbing hope of escape, Florence eagerly dragged the light pine chest of drawers underneath the door, and lifted the one chair upon it.

There was room for her to climb to the wide, dusty, open space, and with her eager, wistful eyes she looked down upon her rescuer.

"Don't be frightened, Miss Florence, you'll not fall."

In a second she had dropped down in Jim Palmer's outstretched arms.

"Oh, thank you! thank you! let us hurry out as quickly as we can. Do you know the way? Do you think any one hears us?"

They were silently descending the stairs.

"No," was his whispered reply. "I will explain all we get clear of the house."

At the lower hall he nervously opened the door, and they walked out into the fresh night air, and Florence thought never was life so sweet before.

Jim Palmer lifted her into the carriage, and wrapped the blankets carefully around her.

"Mr. Chessom would never forgive me if you caught a cold."

"Darling Arthur!"

And her eyes lighted up in a fond, affectionate glow.

"He's a fine young man, sure enough, Miss Florence, and very nearly wild at your disappearance. It was only to-day he learned of your whereabouts."

"How, Mr. Palmer, how?" she asked, eagerly.

Palmer shook his head.

"That is more than I know, you see. I suppose he'll tell you all about it when you get to Chessom's Pride."

"Am I to go to Chessom's Pride?"

A delicious little smile played on her lips.

So he said, by the back road, for fear they'd miss you at the Haunted House, and be sure to follow on the main turnpike. It's a little further and lonelier, but that don't signify."

that she had indulged in in all those awful hours.

"As if I cared! Besides, Mr. Palmer, your kindness entirely overbalances their poverty. I wish you would drive around that way."

"All right! It's just as you say, Miss Florence."

He urged the horses into a faster trot, and the carriage dashed along, bearing Florence every second nearer and nearer to a yawning pit.

And Jim Palmer, smiling under his rough fur cap, chirruped to the horses, and chuckled to himself.

My lucky star is in the ascendant! Poor innocent child, to believe my trumped-up story! Aunt and cousin Kate! Well, I've got her, at any rate!"

## CHAPTER XI.

## THE EMPTY ROOM.

TRUE to his word, Ellis Dorrance came to the Haunted House that evening, at the appointed hour.

Mary admitted him to Isabel's presence at once, who awaited him with a knowledge in her heart fully calculated to render his call as delightful as he had anticipated.

He had been congratulating himself the past few hours on the bold coup *à état* he had consummated; Florence Arbuthnot a prisoner under the surveillance of her fiery-hearted rival, Isabel Lefevre. Perhaps the only drawback to the wicked pleasure he enjoyed was the knowledge that Gussie Palliser and he were enemies.

In the very depths of his soul he was sorry it was so; for, try as he might to persuade himself to the contrary, and pretend he cared nothing for it, it was a disagreeable disappointment to Ellis Dorrance to be so suddenly deprived of Gussie's charming society, especially when he realized the manner in which she had become possessed of his secret, that he had guarded so carefully from her, and still intended to preserve until it suited him to divulge it.

So, all that day, he had chided himself for his clumsiness in permitting Gussie to learn of her rival, and of his foolishness in not healing the breach immediately it was made; and he went to Isabel Lefevre, fully determined after an interview with her prisoner, to seek Gussie, and effect a reconciliation. The moment he entered Isabel's presence, he experienced a sensation that told him there was evil brewing; a second glance at her dark, gloomy face and eyes, where a hidden fire smoldered, assured him of it; he thought Florence had prevailed upon her to believe what was the truth.

"Isabel, you have no word of welcome? It is the first time you ever withheld a kiss and a caress?"

Her lip curled contemptuously.

"And it is the last. Miss Arbuthnot can possibly accommodate you."

She looked him steadily in the face, smiling when she saw the look of amazement overspread his features.

"Miss Arbuthnot! Who is she?"

Then Isabel laughed; a low, musical sound it was, that somehow made Dorrance feel that the ground under his feet was sliding.

"There is no need of any more childish masquerading. I certainly know, as well as you, that the young lady up-stairs is Florence Arbuthnot, whom you abducted from her room an hour or so before you brought her here."

A tense line gathered around Dorrance's lips, but he never flinched under the smiling, sardonic, defiantly-triumphant eyes that were piercing him through and through.

"It is a lie," he said, slowly.

"Granted that you sometimes indulge in the little provocations yourself, Ellis, we will leave the disputed question. Suppose I were to tell you, you have been darkly false to me?"

The suppressed rage in her stormy face, under her low, even tones, was disagreeable even to Ellis Dorrance, so bold in his badness, that he had not thought of it before.

"I should answer as I answered before."

"Ah! but you would not dare! Look at me, and see if I am in earnest."

And her flashing, scornful eyes were lurid in their gleaming wrath.

She suddenly sprang from her chair, where she had been indolently reclining, as one might imagine a leopardess crouching for a sudden, violent attack.

"I am in earnest; you have dared whisper love words to other women—this pretty Florence, and another, a dark-faced beauty, whose name I know! You dared do this when you thought I would not know it; and, because for months you have snatched at my throat, you have dared to bring her here, thinking to blind my eyes because I had erst-time trusted and loved you."

Dorrance was dismayed at this outburst, and he was wondering how he could best refute what she said; but she began again, more wrathful than before.

"I tell you you have awakened a very devil in my heart! You have trifled with one who will not brook such an outrage! I shall mete out to you your own reward, Ellis Dorrance. You are in my hands, this very moment, to be used as I see fit."

A contemptuous laugh—he regretted the next moment—issued from his lips.

"You are beside yourself, Isabel! I know not what ideas you have in that pretty little head of yours; I only know you are talking sheerest nonsense. Call Mary to show me to Ida's room."

"No, sir. Ida is no less a myth than 'Florence.' The beautiful, graceful girl you left here twenty-four hours ago is no more."

He wheeled sharply around.

"What do you mean? Have you dared to kill her? Isabel! answer me before I strike you down!"

He was deathly pale, and his eyes were intensely black in their anger.

She waved him off.

"Have you never heard of my hot-headed Italianes killing our rivals?"

"If you have, by—no, I'll murder you, you woman!"

He strode fiercely to the hall door, but his little firm hand arrested him.

"Hark, Ellis Dorrance! Last night, when I learned of your treble perfidy, I vowed a vow, before high Heaven, to be avenged. This girl you think you love; this girl was in my power. So, Ellis Dorrance, through her I have touched you. I have made of her a mulatto girl, whom her own mother, or even you, would not recognize. I shall take her on a foreign tour—where, you need not know—as my maid. I have told her I would shoot her, or poison her, if she attempts to escape; she is mine, and you dare not prove who she is!"

The ringing triumph in her voice was

maddening to the man, who stood listening to her defiant tones.

His complexion grew more deathly pale; his eyes were insufferably brilliant in their concentrated glare, his hands were trembling from the horrible rage that was in his soul; when he spoke, his voice was low and husky.

"Isabel! lead me to her at once; and, as sure as there is a God in the Heavens above us, you shall suffer for this—if it be true! I doubt every word you say."

"As you please. Perhaps, when you see, you will believe."

She led the way up the stairs, her fingers clasping a tiny siletto in her pocket; she was on her guard.

But Ellis was only thinking of Florence; Isabel would dare the deed, he knew, despite what he had said. If she had, how could he regain her, without exposing himself?"

He ground his teeth in a paroxysm of rage, as Isabel turned the key and opened the door.

It pushed heavily, as if something was standing against it.

A second effort, and they stood within—an empty room!

Something like a howl of supremest wrath came from Dorrance's lips.

"You have done this, you fiend! you lying traitress!"

But Isabel, with whitened cheeks and parted lips, was standing in blank amazement at the signs of confusion in the room.

"As I hope for mercy, I did not know she was gone!" And when Dorrance saw her face he was constrained to believe her.

He pushed roughly past her, ran down the stairs and into the room for his hat and gloves, then dashed out into the dark night, with unspoken thoughts flying madly through his brain.

"It is Chessom's doings! curses eternal light on him!"

(To be continued.—Commenced in No. 128.)

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## THE LAND OF THE BEAUTIFUL.

Suggested by the grand scenery of America.

BY CHARLES OLLIVANT.

Columbia's the land where the sun doth ever shine,  
The sky is always blue, the air is pure and fine;  
Where, in summer, from the west the gentle breezes blow,  
And in the winter season falls the feathery snow.  
Where, in autumn, all the woods in vivid colors gleam,  
The colors of the rainbow—so bright it seems a dream.  
While through their depths there wanders the gently-flowing stream,  
The crystal rill that o'er so beautiful doth seem.  
And when spring begins to dawn upon the fruitful land,  
The leaves begin to open, the blossoms to expand,  
Then all the earth is changed, as by a magic wand  
Cold winter disappears—the woods again are grand.  
The caroling of birds once more is heard above,  
As one unto the other utter notes of love.  
The mock-bird pours his peerless song from out the cedar grove,  
While softly cooing to his mate is heard the turtle-dove.  
Deep in the leafy forest the blue-bird wings his flight,  
Filling it with melody from early dawn till night.  
The mirthful oriole is seen perched on a tulip tree;  
And afar is heard the lay of the plaintive *kee-da-dee*.  
Oh, Columbia's a lovely land—the loveliest on earth—  
The brightest jewel in the crown of Him who gave it birth.  
I see it in the budding trees, that tell me it is spring,  
Whose green and golden frondage glads memories to me bring:  
I hear it in the trilling of gayly-plumaged birds  
That sounds upon my dreamy sense like angel-uttered words:  
I feel it in the zephyr's breath as it fans my temples by  
For it whispers to me gently, that God is in the sky.  
*Salisbury, Cheshire, England, 1872.*

## Strangely Wed:

OR,

## WHERE WAS ARTHUR CLARE?

BY JENNIE DAVIS BURTON,  
AUTHOR OF "ADRIA, THE ADOPTED," "CECIL'S DECEIT," ETC., ETC.

## CHAPTER XXII.

## JUSTINE FINDS A CLUE.

JUSTINE's first impulse was to fly from The Terrace, and the pitfalls that awaited her there.

"Oh," she thought, whom can I trust when a woman could so shamelessly betray me? I know now that my dream was not all a dream. I believe that Miss Gardiner stole my ring from my finger while I slept, probably instigated by my guardian.

"Oh, you precious pair of plotters! what would you say, I wonder, to my knowledge of your infamous schemes? We shall see if I can not meet your hypocrisy with the strategy which in my hands is justifiable as a means of self-defense.

"To you, Mr. Granville, I owe no duty; to you, Miss Gardiner, neither obligation nor gratitude. I shall have no compunctions now that I am assured of the fate you are planning for me; but I'll thwart your schemes by any means, fair or foul, that I can command.

"Oh, to think that I should have so foolishly confided in that woman! For myself I do not care, but have I not placed Gerald in greater jeopardy? She knows how I planned for his escape from the prison, and I can not doubt but that she has already betrayed him! My darling! if my folly has thrown a suspicion of reproach upon you, it shall be mine to clear you of every shadow. Oh, me! I have been easily blinded; I have made vain vaunts and walked straight into the trap my enemies set for me, but, for your sake, my husband, I will be so wary that I shall thwart their wicked plans."

Miss Gardiner executed her trust most faithfully. Justine, thoroughly upon her guard, saw, without pretending to see, that the espionage over her was complete.

Miss Gardiner's maid, Finette, had been sent for, together with such luggage as the lady would require during her stay at The Terrace. And now, every movement of Justine's was carefully noted by the sharp eyes of either mistress or maid. Even the household servants, glancing at her askance and sorrowfully shaking their heads, had combined with the forces against her.

She knew herself to be watched night and day, and endured it more patiently than she might have done but for a resolve she had already taken.

"The measure they mete me shall be returned to them," she said, to herself. It was the second day of Mr. Granville's absence. Justine was careful to give her enemies no hint of the information she had gained, so she met Miss Gardiner with apparently the same frank confidence she had hitherto given her, and, though burning with impatience, would not draw suspicion upon herself by any premature movement.

Her guardian had prohibited her departure from the immediate surroundings of The Terrace, and in this she yielded him implicit obedience. Perhaps she knew that an open disregard of his mandates would have immediately deprived her of the semblance of liberty she now enjoyed.

The afternoon was wearing close upon evening when she drew a shawl loosely about her shoulders, and went out upon the terraces. She knew that Finette was hovering near, screening herself behind the shrubbery, with some extra wrappings over her arm to serve as a pretext for her presence there should she know herself discovered; but Justine, preferring the silent espionage of the maid to the companionship of the mistress, gave no sign of consciousness.

She left the terraces after a time, following the curve of the drive in the direction of the stables. She had seen Mace go alone into the harness room, and he, of all the servants about the place, was the only one she could trust. She found him polishing the solid silver buckles, with a lugubrious expression of countenance.

"Why, Mace," she said, laughingly, "I never saw you wear such a funeral aspect before! What melancholy prospect have you in view?"

The man started and looked up in an embarrassed way.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Justine. I didn't know you were nigh; leastwise, I didn't mean you should see—" His tongue blundered confusedly, but his meaning was apparent in the piteous look he gave her.

"Look here, Mace," said Justine, in a low, decided tone. "I know perfectly well what report has been set afloat regarding me. I want you to look at me now and tell me if there is anything in my appearance to indicate that I am not sane as you are."

She turned her face squarely to his view, and met his eyes with a clear, steady gaze.

"I never saw a crazy person look like that," muttered Mace, half to himself.

"Of course not. How long have you lived at The Terrace, Mace?"

"Full twenty years, Miss. I was only a chunk of a boy when I first came here."

"You were not coachman then, of course?" continued Justine, in a tone which was half-inquiry, half-assertion.

"No, Miss. I was only stable-boy at first, but young Mr. Clare—your father, Miss Justine—took a fancy to me, and took me into the house to wait on him. A gentle master he was to me, and I've not forgot his kindness. I had a poor old widowed mother, who was like to have been turned out of house and home by Mr. Granville, too, who'd just come to be master here. Well, when Mr. Clare knew of it, he bought the title deed of the house—there'd been a mortgage on it to a most ill-fated value—and gave her a free lease for the rest of her life. Poor gentleman! he was always weakly, and after he took to his room I was sent back to a place in the stables. I had a liking for horses always, and so came to be coachman in time."

"I am glad that you hold such a kindly remembrance of my father, Mace; I want you now to be a friend to his daughter."

"My guardian has an object in getting me out of the way, and only yesterday morning I heard him planning to have me sent to an insane asylum. Was my father supposed to be a poor man, Mace, when you can first remember him?"

"No, Miss Justine. Everybody wondered when it was found that he'd left near about nothing to you and your mother, rich as she was in her own right besides. I remember the day that her guardian, old Mr. Gardiner, rode over here, and would give up the papers into nobody's hands but her own."

"Gardiner," repeated Justine, amazedly.

"Yes, Miss. The lady staying at the house now is his daughter, but I remember, there was a grudge of some sort between her and Mrs. Clare."

"Ah, now I have the key to her treachery," thought Justine.

"I never could rightly understand what became of the money," continued Mace, reflectively.

"I can tell you, then. Mr. Granville got possession of it all, and it is to prevent it being forced from him now that he has reported me deranged."

"And, Mace, every word I tell you is truth. My father did not die! Mr. Granville has hidden him away for fifteen years, as a lunatic, too. Heaven knows whether it be true or not, but I do not believe it."

The man was staring at her as if he thought she really had lost her senses at last.

"I am not raving," she said, quietly.

"What I say is all true."

"I have not time to tell you more now. I am not lost sight of for a moment by the spies Mr. Granville has set to watch over me. Look there."

Mace looked, and saw Finette, who had emerged into the open walk ostensibly to carry on a flirtation with Michael, the footman, who was lounging out for the evening air.

"You are the only one I can trust," continued she. "You will stand by me, will you not?"

"I will indeed, Miss Justine," returned Mace, with a sudden burst of enthusiasm.

"I'll do anything you ask of me."

"I knew I could rely upon you," said she, gratefully. "You remember the day I left The Terrace?"

He signified his assent.

"Mr. Granville was gone a night and a day immediately afterward. Can you tell me where?"

"None of us knew. He set off in the late evening; what makes me remember so particular was that he wore that white overcoat he's not had on another time all the winter. It was while he was gone, too, that the infernal machine came to young Mr. Lambert. They say that the man who sent the box has as good as convicted himself."

"How is that?" Justine forced herself to ask quietly, while her heart throbbed in painful bounds.

"He tried to break jail last night. It's as good as confessing to his guilt, you know."

She repressed the moaning cry upon her lips, and turned her whitening face away.

"I want you to go down the ravine in the Granville wood, Mace, to a little hut which is built there. You will find an old woman, and a young fellow—a Gipsy—who are good friends of mine. Tell them what I have told you, and they will find means of aiding me. Will you do it, Mace?"

"Yes, Miss Justine."

She walked away, turning after a few steps to call back to him:

"Let me know when Lady Bess is over her lameness, Mace. It is a month since I've been on her back, and I want one ride while these bright days last."

Mace understood her tactics when he saw that Finette had sauntered within earshot.

The latter accosted him with a volley of light chatter at her tongue's end.

It was a beautiful evening, and how could Monsieur Mace hide himself in that room while the sun was setting all in purple and red? Oh, what a lovely whip up there on the wall! and the young lady was very condescending, was she not, to stay talking with him so long? Was it really true, as she'd been told, that mademoiselle was a little touched here?—laying her finger on her brow. Odd, wasn't it, to think of riding so late in the season, with the road so lonely, too? For her part, she was partial to a carriage at all times. Did Miss Clare ever drive alone?—it was getting quite fashionable for young ladies to do so. What had she been saying to him, anyway?

All with an accompaniment of smiles, and flutters, and coquettish airs, that were quite lost on stolid Mace.

Miss Justine was quite friendly with them all, he assured her. Touched?—some thought so. She was rather odd and whimsical, but for his part he hoped it was nothing more. What had she said? Been teasing to take out Lady Bess, but he'd see that it wasn't done; why, the road was frozen so that it was worse than a cobblestone pavement, and every one knew how that would use up a pacer.

And convinced that all was right, Finette fluttered back to the footman, who was much more to her mind, having meantime seen that Justine entered the house again.

The latter encountered Miss Gardiner on

the broad stairway, robed in full dinner-dress.

"En toilette already?" said Justine, carelessly, in passing. "I was wondering if you might not be needing your maid; I saw her just now promenading one of the garden walks."

"French maids, my dear, are often ornamental as useful," returned Miss Alethea, lightly. "I keep one because it is *au fait* to do so, but I don't let my own fingers forget the purpose they were made for. I'll send Finette to you if you care for her assistance, Justine."

"No, thank you. I'm going to Sylvie for a half-hour before I dress; I've scarcely had an uninterrupted chat with her since my return, and we were inseparable always before."

She passed on in the direction of the latter's apartments, but found them quite vacant.

She had been inexpressibly shocked at the change which had been effected in her friend during the few weeks of their separation. Sylvie's slight form had wasted, and her delicate face lost the faint flush of health, while she had gained an ethereal look and a solemn wistfulness in her big sunken blue eyes that half-awed impulsive Justine.

The latter had not seen Lambert since her return. She still entertained a ranking of resentment notwithstanding the terrible calamity which had befallen him, and this had persuaded her to avoid the apartments to which he was still confined. She turned toward them now, knowing that she would find Sylvie there.

The door opened noiselessly beneath her touch, and she stood on the threshold a moment, unseen by the occupants of the room.

All her resentment faded away at sight of that pitiable wreck.

Lambert reclined on a low couch with a pile of soft bright cushions at his back. His whole wealth of fair bright hair had been shorn close to his head; the long glittering side-whiskers that had been his pride were sacrificed as well. A zigzag scar of a vivid scarlet color marred his once-hand-some face; but it was his eyes, fixed in a wide-open gaze upon his companion, that sent a thrill of infinite pity through Justine's heart.

They reflected the same kind of pleading fondness which she had seen in those of some timid animal.

Sylvie was sitting by him; he was holding her hand, stroking it softly with his thin white fingers. She looked up but did not move as Justine came forward.

"I am glad you have come, dear," she said, quietly. "You were scarcely good friends with Percy when you went away, and now I know you will not feel any ill-will against him. He does not know you, poor fellow!"

"Poor fellow!" echoed Justine, with a sigh. "I was prepared for a change, but not for one so startling. Has he recognized no one since his injury?"

"He knows me," returned Sylvie, "and is always quite contented when I am with him. Look! I really believe he remembers you."

Justine spoke to him with her eyes suffused with tears.

Lambert looked at her with a troubled face, with a shifting, puzzled expression which for an instant had seemed almost like recognition.

"I thought I remembered something," he said, plaintively. "It was there, but it has gone away now."

"Try to think," said Justine. "You know me now, do you not? I am Justine; don't you remember?"

He shook his head slowly.

"It's such hard work to think," he replied, pettily, like a spoiled child. "I have tried often, but it makes my head ache—Sylvie must think for me."

"They say he will never be better," she whispered to Justine. "Once, when papa came in, I thought he remembered; but he grew excited and was so feverish afterward that the doctor thought it best papa should not come again. Is it not sorrowful to see a young life like his so suddenly made blank?"

"But, he may recover yet," said Justine, trying to speak hopefully. "Good medical advice has worked greater wonders before this."

Sylvie shook her head mournfully, and after lingering a moment more, Justine went silently away.

"How our lives grow tangled," she said to herself, with a sigh. "My poor Saint Sylvie, you are more to be pitied than even he."

The corridor was clear as she emerged from the room, and seeing this she darted toward a large stationary wardrobe which was built in a recess at the end of it.

She remembered having seen that handsome white overcoat with its trimmings of rich fur, hanging there.

It was there still, and she plunged her hands elbow-deep into one after another of the great pockets.

She found nothing but some bits of crumpled pasteboard crushed in the corner of one of them. With the insignificant trophies hidden in her hand, she hastened back to her chamber, encountering Finette near the door.

"Treachery for treachery," she said to herself, as she examined her prize by the firelight.

There was a punched railway ticket from Pittsburgh to Centerton, and the stamp upon it bore the date, "Nov. 30th."

It was the night of the thirtieth of November, that that box had come to Lambert!

The other bit of pasteboard was merely a business card. Justine's first impulse was to fling it upon the grate, but, reading the name upon it, a comprehensive light flashed into her eyes.

It was "James Wert, Locksmith, No. 9 Blank street, Pittsburgh."

She put the two securely away together.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

THE TRAP AND WHO IS CAUGHT IN IT.

MR. GRANVILLE returned in the gray dawn of the following morning. He was haggard, travel-stained and morose. He had scarcely slept or eaten; he had telegraphed to detectives in all the cities reached by direct line of travel from that section, to watch the different termini; he had made a flying visit to his lawyer, warning the latter to be upon his guard against an attempt which he had reason to believe would be made to establish an absurd but possibly troublesome charge against him. He had searched far and wide for some trace of the fugitives, and had failed to discover the slightest clue.

He passed a word or two with Miss Gard-

iner, assuring himself that nothing of importance had occurred during his absence; then retired to his own apartments, and did not appear during the day.

Justine found an opportunity to speak with Mace, seeking the result of his mission. He had been to the little woodland hut, and found it quite deserted. He made such inquiry as he could, without exciting attention, but neither Art Lyon or old Nance had been seen in the neighborhood at any recent date.

Justine was quite alone except for such aid as faithful Mace might render her.

There was an arrival at The Terrace during that same day. A gentleman was set down at the gates, by a fly from the town, and slowly ascended the marble steps of the terraces, swinging a light valise in his hand.

He sent his card up to Miss Gardiner. The lady was in the blue drawing-room instructing Justine in the sleight of some intricate stitch. Time hung heavily on their hands at The Terrace these days, until even worsted-work, which was Justine's pet abomination, proved a happy resource. It was hard with such an unrecurrent of strong excitement to preserve a tranquil, monotonous surface.

"My own medical adviser," explained Miss Alethea, glancing at the pasteboard. "I persuaded Mr. Granville to consult him in the case of that poor Mr. Lambert. I'm afraid your guardian forgot to order an apartment prepared for him; will you see that it is done, my dear?"

Justine saw through this flimsy pretext to dispense with her presence, but was quite willing to withdraw at the risk of having new plots laid against her.

"There is nothing more I can do here," she said to herself. "I have found my clue, and I will only incur new dangers by remaining here. I will fly from The Terrace this very night, if I can find the opportunity."

She was obliged to relinquish the project as impracticable when she found that Mace had been sent away on some legitimate mission. She could not afford to run the risk of another discovery and recapture; for Gerald's sake she must avoid rash ventures.

The whole party gathered about the dinner-table at the usual hour. To an observer they would have seemed a merry company, fully alive to the enjoyments of the time, with care a stranger in their midst.

Justine was more versatile and brilliant than at any previous time since her return. She was measuring the depth of the new recruit in the enemy's service, and came to the conclusion that they had procured a dangerous ally to work against her.

He was forty—short, florid, and with a crop of coarse black hair, close-cut and standing upright over his round, bullet head. Rapidly and cunning were stamped on his thick features.

Doctor Bruce was molded, body and soul, out of the material from which the most brutal ruffianism springs, but some untoward freak of Fate or Fortune had deposited him in a sphere high above the one for which nature had evidently fitted him.

"If I had money enough," thought Justine, "I could easily buy him over. I wouldn't dare attempt it while I have little more than promises to offer. He would make what he could of me, and then sell me to the highest bidder."

He talked easily and wore the garb of a gentleman; but he had a gruff, harsh voice, which, taken with his repulsive countenance, made him any thing than a pleasing companion.

"My dear," Miss Alethea said to Sylvie as they were leaving the dining-hall, "I mean to take possession of your charge to-morrow. Doctor Bruce assures me that he is quite strong enough to be driven out; I think fresh air, change of scene and moderate exercise will prove beneficial. You must take a little rest, you most devoted of nurses! You are not afraid to trust Lambert in my hands, are you?"

"But he has not been out of his room," remonstrated Sylvie. "I fear the change will be too sudden."

"It is the very thing he needs, and I shall not listen to objections while I am able to shake superior orders over your head. I have your approval, have I not, Mr. Granville?" she appealed, languidly.

"I beg your pardon?" He had not been following the drift of the conversation.

Miss Alethea explained, appealing to the doctor to corroborate her assertion of the good effects to be expected as a result of the drive.

"By all means, try it," said Mr. Granville. "I quite agree with you; Percy has been cooped up in those close rooms fully long enough. How can we expect him to gain strength when my girl here is drooping like a faded lily? I have not been watching you closely enough, my daughter; you must promise not to over-tax your strength as you have been doing, or I shall forbid your presence in the invalid's room entirely."

He drew Sylvie to him, with a caressing gesture. After all, there was some good in the man's nature, and it was all centered in his love for his daughter.

"At least, I may go, too?" she asked.

"Not to be thought of," declared Miss Gardiner, with a playful assumption of tyranny. "My object is as much to relieve you of all sense of responsibility for a short time, as to give Lambert a change from the tedium of the house."

Sylvie could make no further protest.

Justine received another summons to the presence of her guardian the following morning. He was in his study, where he had just concluded a private interview with Doctor Bruce.

She refused the chair he proffered her on her entrance, and silently awaited his pleasure.

"I will not detain you long," said he, grimly observant of the coolness with which she ignored his civilities. "I merely require your signature to a document I have already prepared."

"You might have spared yourself the trouble of sending for me, then," she returned. "I have quite too great an appreciation of your diplomatic powers to follow any course you may choose to prescribe."

"You are complimentary. I do not doubt that you will comply with my request when I shall have explained the nature of the writing to you."

"I will read it if you require me to do so, but I assure you that I will not put my hand to paper—no matter for what apparent purpose—at your desire. I have heard of sympathetic inks, and of the body of documents being changed with chemical preparations; I should fear some such metamorphose in case there are no objectionable clauses."

An unpleasant smile parted her guardian's lips.

"Your suspicions are quite without foundation," he replied, in that quiet manner which she had learned to know portended mischief. "The paper is full of technical phrases, and I can detail its contents in a tenth of the time you would require to read it."

"It is simply an application on your part for a divorce from Gerald Ponteney. The grounds for granting it are apparent enough. As your guardian, I have legal authority to act for you, but as I said, your signature is also a requisition."

"How dare you propose such a thing to me?" cried Justine, in hot anger. "This is my answer, Mr. Granville."

She snatched the document from the table, and tearing it to fragments, scattered them on the floor.

"How fortunate I took the precaution to duplicate it," remarked Mr. Granville, coolly. "This outbreak was not quite unexpected, and I have provided for it. Be kind enough to attach your name to this."

He drew a second paper from his pocket, and spread it upon the table, forcing his own pen, which was fixed in a richly ornamented handle of solid gold, into her hand.

"I will not sign," she declared with passionate vehemence, flinging the pen away from her. It crashed through a handsome vase of Bohemian glass, and Justine saw, with a vague thrill of terror, the exultant smile with which her guardian was regarding her.

A slight ejaculation at her back caused her to turn suddenly. The door between the study and the library was open, and from the latter room their interview had been witnessed by Doctor Bruce and Miss Gardiner.

Like a flash, Justine comprehended the ruse to which she had fallen victim.

The scene had been preconcerted, and her violence would be used as a proof of her insanity.

The lady came forward with a solicitous countenance.

"Mr. Granville, indeed, you must permit the child to use her own judgment regarding this matter. Justine, dear, you should not yield to such undue excitement. I am glad I chanced to be near, for I think your guardian is scarcely dealing justly with either himself or you. You should have explained to her more fully, Austin. Of course, a man who would entice a mere child—as you were dear—into a clandestine marriage, must have had a mercenary motive at the back. This Gerald Ponteney, your guardian has taken the pains to ascertain, got some rumor of the fact that you are heiress to considerable wealth; and you, being so young, fell an easy victim. I don't wish to pain you, Justine, but it is for your good to know the truth. Gerald Ponteney is an adventurer if not a criminal."

If a glance could scathe, Justine's would have burned into the false woman's soul.

She was reckless of all consequences in her intense anger.

"You have changed your appreciation of him, Miss Gardiner, since the night you disguised yourself as a man and played the lover to my mother. Was it to prevent her from becoming a victim that you did it?"

A deadly glance shot from Miss Alethea's eyes; her fair face grew set and stony, but she was too much woman of the world to lose her self-command.

"Yes, my dear," she replied, with calm sweetness. "I have always been thankful that I succeeded."

"You may retire, Justine," interrupted Mr. Granville. "I perceive that it is quite useless to reason with you while you retain that obstinate frame of mind."

"Thanks, my estimable guardian," Justine flung back at him. "May you meet with your own deserts before you find me more docile."

She rushed away to have her passion die out in a chilling realization of the injury she had probably done to her own cause.

"Oh, this unruly tongue of mine!" she exclaimed, regretfully. "Why could I not be patient? Thank fortune, I did not quite tell that I have penetrated all their base plots; but they'll be more bitter and watchful until—"

Until their plots should end in success or defeat. Which should it be?

She knew now that she had no time to spare in her movement to defeat them. She turned toward the door, and with her hand upon the knob, discovered that summary measures had already been taken.

During her absence from her apartments Finette had secured the keys, and she found herself again a prisoner.







"It is well," said Charlotte Lacy. "Tonight we will arrange the details."

And then she turned round to Everard, who had understood not a word so far of the rapid French, and had stood, wondering while the colloquy was going on.

"Come, Mr. Barbour," she said, as composedly as if in her own parlor in Philadelphia. "let us enter the house and partake of our good Madame Montour's hospitality. She has treated you somewhat roughly, perhaps, but she is a good soul at bottom, this Madame Montour, and you will look different when we have made a Seneca of you. Come, Black Eagle, your wish is granted, and now you must be friends with the young white chief. I say it."

Black Eagle bowed with the courtesy he always exhibited to these two ladies, and answered, in tolerable English:

"Black Eagle is glad to see de little chief. He brave little chief, and fight well. Shake hands, brudder."

Everard took the hand of the tall chief, and could not help whispering to Miss Lacy, as they walked toward the house:

"A noble chief, Miss Lacy."

"He is," she answered. "He and Brant are exceptions to the general run of Indians, like our fierce Montour here."

They were several paces in advance, and Everard asked, cautiously:

"Why do you call her Montour? and what in Heaven's name is the secret of your power here, Miss Lacy?"

Charlotte smiled proudly.

"In this valley," she said, "and in many another place, I represent an organization which sways chiefs and queens; ay, woman as I am, there is a realm that my brain alone controls, for my king's service; and your Congress shall yet own that it is a realm of power. Ask no more questions, Everard Barbour, but thank Heaven that you found me here to save your life. I call the woman chief Madame Montour, because it is her name, outside of the tribes. How like you her home in the Glen?"

"It is most lovely," said Everard, looking round the rocky amphitheater with admiration. "I have never seen a more beautiful spot." Does it extend much further?

"Fully a mile. You shall see it all tomorrow with me," she answered, with a charming smile. "It will look none the less beautiful, will it?"

"Nay, but the pleasure will be so much the greater," he answered. And then they entered the house, which they found full of handsome Indian girls, who came forward to wait on their queen and her guests, with alacrity.

Queen Esther now, still more to Everard's astonishment, developed a new character. She became a hospitable hostess, conversing fluently in French and English, and displaying a softness and grace of manner that rivaled Miss Lacy herself. Nothing perhaps was stranger about this remarkable woman than her adaptability. She had been in Philadelphia some years before, with the other chiefs of the Six Nations, and had been remarked on for her exquisite softness of manner, that told of the breeding of high society. Catherine Montour had not forgotten the palace in the wig-wam.

Her house, though handsome, was rather destitute of furniture, the floors being bare, and the skins of animals forming almost the only seats, except in Queen Esther's own apartments; but the food brought in by the servants was abundant and delicate, and Everard retired to rest that night feeling that his lines had fallen in pleasant places, for he was treated as a friend by all the Indians around.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## DOUBLE-DEATH'S DISCOVERY.

At the same time that Everard Barbour was enjoying the reaction from hostility to hospitality in the glen of Sheshequin, Marian Neilson, depressed in spirits and almost broken-hearted, thinking her lover dead, was slowly journeying toward Albany, under the escort of a small party of military, up the line of the old Albany Post Road. The necessities of the times had caused her to be delayed for some days on the road, and it was only the paternal kindness of Washington himself that enabled her to be traveling now. She had been brought to his headquarters, at that time near Morris-town, New Jersey, and the kind heart of the Commander-in-chief had been touched by her distresses, while the ladies of Morris-town had hastened to supply her necessities with every generosity. Availing himself of the opportunity of a party going toward Albany with funds to pay the troops stationed there, the General had offered to send poor Marian home under their escort as far as they went; and, at his own earnest desire, Double-Death had been detailed to act as scout for the party, with permission to see Marian to her own home, after which he was to return, having six weeks further granted him to report in.

Tim effected his purpose in safety, without any extraordinary adventure, and in about three weeks from the time of leaving Morris-town, Marian was home again, clasped in her mother's arms. Many and sad were the grievings then, over the terrible tidings she had to impart, of so many relatives and friends massacred at Wyoming; and heavy was the anxiety of all as to the fate, probable and shocking, of the captive lover.

Tim Murphy found it difficult to tear himself away from the sorrowing family; and when he at last turned his horse's head toward the south, it was with a forced resolution, which had been floating in his mind for some time, to seek for Everard, and ascertain his fate at all hazards. The scout was just the man to do this. Quick, ready and adaptable, a perfect Indian linguist, he had made up his mind to penetrate the Genesee valley, and find Everard, dead or alive, before he returned.

Double-Death was well mounted and armed. He rode the magnificent charger that had come into Everard's possession so mysteriously in Philadelphia, and carried a pair of double-barreled pistols, besides his own famous rifle. In those days, long before revolvers were thought of, such an equipment rendered its wearer sufficiently formidable to cope with several men, if he was a good shot and cool and bold as Tim Murphy.

Tim turned his horse away from the Neilson's house, and took the road leading south to Albany, till he was out of sight. He did not propose to reveal his plan to any one. As soon as the woods hid him from sight he left the road, and took up his journey by bridle-paths that led due west, toward the Mohawk river. The country here was wild and uncultivated for many miles, and the

way led into the heart of what had been, not long before, the Indian territory. Johnsonstown, the next village, was the ancient residence of Sir William Johnson, the British Indian agent, who had lived there in baronial splendor for many years; and his son, Sir John Johnson, an inveterate Tory, was supposed to be hovering about there, even now. The only American settlements, feeble and scattered as those were, indeed, were Fort Plain and Cherry Valley.

But Tim Murphy was not the man to be daunted by any country, however full of danger. The scout rode steadily on, the rest of the day, at a rapid pace, wherever the path was open, and toward evening had emerged from the underwood that told of the neighboring settlements, and entered the primeval forest, where the trees stood in rows of columns for miles, and the way between them was all open. He had left Johnson's Hall to his rear, and made his evening camp by the borders of the Mohawk river.

Tim had taken the precaution, before starting, of putting a sack of grain on his horse's back, besides his own provisions, and he found the benefit of his foresight now. He did not dare to make a fire, for certain signs he had seen, convinced him that Indian war-parties were around. He unsaddled his horse, and fed the animal plentifully, and then started on foot for a tour of observation, to find if there were any near, whose vicinity might be dangerous. As the sun went down, and the forest became dark, the chorus of frogs and katydids around assured him that all was right for the present, and after a brief tour he returned, and ate his supper in peace. A second time did the wary scout set forth on his reconnoitering trip before he thought of sleep, though he had ridden sixty miles that day; and this time he was rewarded for his vigilance. As he ascended a little rise of ground covered with trees, he caught sight, a long way off, of a bright light among the tree-trunks, which he knew at once to be a camp-fire.

"Now, who the devils that?" soliloquized Mr. Murphy, reflectively. "Injuns, by the piper that played before Moses! No white men would be campin' out here, ay, they wasn't born fools. Timothy, me boy, let's go on a little voyage of discovery towards them gentlemen. I know ye're tired, Mr. Murphy, but ay ye was to wake up to-morrow mornin' without a scalp, may be ye'd never be tired again, and ye'd never see Mr. Everard. So, Tim, ye blackguard, git up and travel."

As he spoke, he was cautiously descending the hill toward the distant fire, his rifle ready for immediate use, stepping cautiously. It was a time of year peculiarly favorable for a silent advance, for the last year's leaves were fully rotted away, and the moss was smooth and soft under foot. Tim advanced in true borderer style, his keen black eyes roving here and there, speltering himself behind every tree as he went, and carefully scanning the ground ahead of him, ere venturing to cross it. In this way it took him near an hour before he came anywhere near the fire, and could distinguish the figures around it. When he did, he halted behind a tree, and took a long and careful observation, before going any nearer.

There were several dark figures passing and repassing before a large camp-fire, and what surprised the scout was, that they were not Indians, but whites, from their dress. Tim Murphy now went down on hands and knees, and crawled slowly nearer to the fire, with the patience and caution of an Indian hunter, resolved to find out for himself the mystery of the fire. If white men were there, they were probably Tories, for Americans would be in their homes. As Tim came nearer, he perceived that the men wore ordinary civilian dress, and had the appearance of servants. Near the fire, also, was a female figure, with the white cap and apron of a French waiting-maid. Tim rubbed his eyes at first, thinking he must be dreaming, but the fact was too visible to be gainsayed. There was a regular smart French maid sitting by a camp-fire in the wild woods, tending a small coffee-pot. Tim pursued his researches still closer, greatly interested, till he was near enough to hear conversation. Then it was that, casting his eyes forward through the woods, beyond the fire, another object met his view, that caused him more astonishment than ever. It was nothing else than a large old-fashioned traveling carriage, drawn up in the shade of the woods, with several horses feeding near it. "An old woman travelin' for her health, bedad!" muttered the scout to himself. "And I've tuk all this trouble, thinkin' they was Injuns. By the howly piker, she must be a quare creature, whoever travels out here in this fashion! Mr. Murphy, there's somethin' devilish quare about this. We'll go a little nearer."

And Double-Death looked sharply round him, and then crawled over, snake-fashion, to the bole of an immense tree, with roots standing up out of the ground so as to make an excellent cover. The tree itself was not more than sixty feet from the fire, and Tim saw that it was as near as he dared go. He could catch the sound of voices, and a considerable chatter it was too, from the servants passing and repassing, but he could not understand much of it, as the language was a barbarous Canadian French. Tim could make out a few words here and there, but no sense.

They appeared to be busy preparing supper for some one in the carriage, for a camp-table was spread out beyond the fire, and dishes were being set out. Presently Tim heard a female voice from the carriage itself, crying: "Francoise! Francoise! Nes tu pas prête encore?"

The French maid jumped up with a quick:

"Oui, Madame la comtesse. Oui, toute de suite. On a servi."

Tim, though he did not understand, was yet struck with the difference of accent and purity of speech of the two females, from the rough habitants around them.

"Bedad, thim's French ladies," he said to himself, and watched anxiously to see what followed.

The smart French maid hurried to the carriage now, and assisted therefrom an elderly lady, whose face Tim could not plainly see, till she was seated at the table. Then the borderer had a full opportunity of inspecting face and figure, and the result increased his astonishment.

He beheld a distinguished and aristocratic-looking old lady, with a dark aquiline face, and keen black eyes, her white hair

\* "Fanny! Fanny! Are you not ready yet?"

Yes, madame the countess, yes, in a minute. Supper's ready."

built up in a tower, in the Pompadour style then prevalent, and surrounded by a black satin hood. The old lady was very richly dressed, jewels glittering on neck and hands, while the buckles of her high-heeled shoes were set with diamonds. Something in her face seemed to be familiar to Tim, but he could not recall it clearly, and he watched the old lady with more than ordinary interest as she proceeded to sup, in a style of elegance and luxury such as Tim had never witnessed in the wilderness.

It was very tantalizing to Double-Death to be so near, to hear every thing and not understand a word of the conversation, for the servants were all still now, and nothing was audible but the clear precise accents of the old lady as she spoke to Francoise, and the latter as she replied to her mistress.

Tim was beginning to think of returning to his horse, and letting the queer party go, when he heard the rapid foot of a man coming into camp on the other side, at the peculiar lope of an Indian, and in a moment more a tall, magnificently framed warrior, in the full regalia of an Indian chief, strode rapidly into the little camp, and grounded the butt of his long rifle in front of the table. His back was turned to Tim as he stood there, but the latter recognized his equipments at once, as belonging to the Senecas.

The old countess looked up, and without any apparent surprise, observed, quietly:

"C'est bien ton nom, ami. Qu'est-ce qu'il y a de nouveau, ce soir?"

The chief replied in broken French, which Murphy did not understand, and seemed to be giving an account of where he had been and what he had seen. Toward the end he glided into the Seneca language, as if the difficulty of a foreign tongue had become too irksome; and then Tim heard something that made him start and look round apprehensively.

"We found the track of a horse," the chief was saying, "and I followed it to the river, where we found the beast tied to a tree, with no master. My warriors are on the master's trail now, but the night is so dark that they may not find him before morning. Otherwise the country is still, and there is no danger."

"The eyes of my brother are clear, and he is a great warrior," replied the lady in the same tongue, which she seemed to speak like a native. "It is some scout or hunter perhaps, and if we catch him, you know what to do."

"I know," said the Indian, proudly. "Keep his tongue still. When the way is dark, and the tongue must be forked, the tomahawk settles the spy and the babbler. It is well. Let the queen sleep in peace. Her sons are around her camp to keep off the spy."

He turned away and left the camp, in the direction in which he had come. As for Tim, he had heard enough to realize that his horse was captured, and men on his own trail. As the Indian chief stood with his back to him, the borderer had more than once covered him with his rifle, almost resolved to shoot him, and escape in the confusion. And yet something restrained Tim's hand, what he could not have told you, which was but the instinctive reluctance to commit a cold-blooded murder. Although he had not seen the face of the Indian, yet there had been something so noble and stately in his appearance, that Tim had involuntarily conceived quite an admiration for him. At the same time he realized that he had no time to lose in getting away from the dangerous vicinity of the camp, the more so as enemies were doubtless concentrating upon him already, and the chief was in all probability even now making a circuit of the camp, out of the dangerous glare of the firelight.

As noiselessly as he had come, Tim slipped away from the trees, and crawled off in the direction of his advance, till he thought himself safe, when he rose and looked back. The camp was all still and the servants were gathered near the table, while he could distinguish the form of the old lady leaning on a crutch-handled stick and moving slowly toward the carriage, assisted by Francoise, the maid.

It was evident that he had not been observed, and the borderer struck off through the woods toward the river, flitting silently from tree to tree, and leaving his old track to the right. In this he was but following an old Indian trick, doubling on his own trail so as to see who was following it. He also put the light of the fire beyond any of his pursuers, so that if they came forward they might be revealed to him.

Pretty soon, as he stole from tree to tree, he realized the benefit of his caution, when he caught sight of a little group of figures on the very place where he had been about an hour before, evidently following his track. It showed to what perfection their woodcraft must have arrived, to be able to follow the trail of a moose under the faint moonlight that came through the trees from above.

Tim chuckled quietly to himself, and placed his thumb to his nose, as he looked at the shadowy figures of the distant trailers. He could count seven men altogether, and had it not been for his horse, the daring borderer would have attacked them there and there, with the surprise in his favor. But Tim was too anxious to recover his animal to fire a shot. He knew that those in charge of the horse would be at once put on the alert by the noise, and probably carry him off, while Tim was just as determined to get his steed back.

"And av there's no more than seven av them," muttered Tim, "I'll go bail to bag the whole of them."

He crawled off between the trees, carefully keeping his body out of the speckled moonlight that lay on the greensward, and every now and then pausing to look back till the trailers were fairly between him and the fire. Then he rose to his feet and went swiftly off, flitting from tree to tree, till he reached the same trail once more, and stood in the footsteps of his pursuers, now broad and easily traced. He had determined to enter his own camp in that manner, as the Indians would be likely to guard all quarters better than that by which they expected their friends.

He stole rapidly along, till he began to recognize the swell of ground from which he had seen the fire, and he resolved, very prudently, that it was not advisable to cross this swell. The necessity of caution had become imperative.

He crept around the base of the swell instead, glancing ahead and upward as he went, till he came close to the spot where he had left his horse.

There stood the animal, tied to a tree, as he had left him, with the saddle and trap-

\* "That's you, my friend. What news to-night?"

pings lying by it exactly as he had left them, and not a trace of a human being near.

Tim Murphy put his finger on the side of his nose and muttered:

"Maybe ye think I'm a fule, Mr. Injun, and maybe ye'll find I ain't such a fule as I luk, bedad."

The astute scout was well aware that the seeming quietude of the scene was only a snare to draw him on, and that his approach to the horse would be a signal for a shot from the thicket. The question remained, how many Indians were on the watch for him, and whether he had been seen as yet. He was about sixty yards from the horse, and commenced a cautious circuit around the neighborhood, expecting every moment to see a dark form start from behind a tree, and the light to begin. Tim was beginning to be puzzled, for the first time in his woodcraft, perhaps. Where the Indians were hidden was a mystery to him, until he happened to come once more to the foot of the little slope of ground, and look up against the sky line. The figures of four more Indians were to be seen in a group at the top, looking toward the distant fire.

In a moment Tim's resolution was taken. With a pistol in one hand and his rifle in the other, he crept cautiously up to the mound, to listen to what the savages were saying, for they appeared to be conversing. He succeeded, by great artifice, in getting within less than thirty feet unheeded, and then listened.

"The chief is gone long," said one. "He must be close on the heels of this hunter."

"We should have gone, too," said another. "The man will never be back for his horse. They will have his scalp before he gets here. Let us take the horse and go forward."

This was all Tim wanted. He had found out that they were the only ones he had to fear. Deliberately he rose to his feet, stepped boldly out and leveled his rifle. CRACK! CRACK! at that distant spot, sufficient, and two Indians dropped before a start was made by the other two. Then they both rushed forward in the direction of the flash, and were met by the cool and indomitable borderer, muzzle to muzzle. Before either could strike with their tomahawks, CRACK! CRACK! went the pistol right and left, and again Double-Death was triumphant by the power of coolness and luck. All four of the Indians were dead or dying. The victor despoiled them of their scalps and ammunition, and then rode away unharmed, leaving the trailers to gnash their teeth at being so outwitted.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## THE FRENCH COUNTESS.

FARMER NEILSON was sitting at the door of his house, proudly contemplating the remains of the breastworks to the right, and the block-house, which was dignified by the name of "Fort Neilson," and the worthy farmer was expatiating to his wife and daughter as follows:

"I tell ye, Hannah Jane, 'tain't no use a talkin'; these here fields are going to be very famous some of these days. Things ain't as they used to be, wife, and when this here war's over, and you and I are in our graves, and Marian's an old grandma, with a hull bushel o' children around the door, then they'll be a-comin' to this 'ere place from all parts of the year, and want to see old John Neilson's house, where the battle was fought that sot Ameriky free."

"How you do go on, John!" said Mrs. Neilson, in a low voice. "Don't you know that Marian can't bear to hear of the battle now, that puts her in mind of poor Everard. You should be careful, John."

John Neilson was repentant at once, when he saw Marian turn away and enter the cottage, with her handkerchief at her eyes. He blundered out:

"Say, old woman, I didn't mean to do that. I'll go and tell her I didn't."

"Leave her alone, John," said the wife, sharply. "She wants to be left alone these days, that's all."

Mrs. Neilson came of a station somewhat superior to her husband, and made him feel the weight of her character in their married life, so that honest John was forced to be silent and submit.

Presently, as he sat in the sun, meditatively puffing his old Powhatan pipe, the rumble of wheels was heard on the road from Quaker Springs. The sound was one but rarely heard in those days, when the country was so unsettled.

"Who in thunder kin that be?" exclaimed honest John, as a large, heavy coach, the body painted yellow, with a black hood, hove in sight. The vehicle was drawn by four horses, and was accompanied by two men on horseback, in immense boots, and hats to match, with blue livery coats turned up with red. Such an equipage had not been seen around Benoit's Hill for many a long year, not since the prime days of Sir William Johnson, though his pattern was still common enough in Quebec.

John Neilson and his wife both watched this vehicle approach them with great surprise, fully expecting it, however, to go on to Albany. Instead of this, it halted at their own gate, and the face of an old lady appeared at the window, a dignified, aristocratic face, with white hair rolled back from a high, narrow forehead.

"Will you please tell me," said the old lady, in a soft, melodious tone of voice, with an exceedingly winning smile, "if Monsieur Jean Neilson live anywhere about here?"

John Neilson started forward in a moment.

"That's me, marm. What kin I do for you, marm?"

"Very much, monsieur," said the old lady, smiling sweetly. "I'm told by my dear friend, the Marquis de la Fayette, dat you are de person of all orders to make inquiry for de bataille dat take place 'ere last year. I am la Comtesse de Montouraine, monsieur, and I shall be very grateful for your help, ven I write de account of my travels on return to France."

Honest John Neilson turned triumphantly to his wife, saying:

"Hannah Jane, what did I tell yer? Didn't I say de folks would be comin' to John Neilson to hear about the battle? Old woman, go into the house. What do you know about war?"

Then he turned round to the countess, full of smiles, not that John adored rank—Americans are never supposed to do that—but it's not every day a real live countess comes to a farmer's door to ask a favor, and a favor that made John feel six inches taller in the granting of it.

"I'm the man that kin tell yer all about it, marm," he said, proudly. "General Poor had his quarters in my kitchen, and I kin

show yer Gates and Burgoyne's place, not an hour's walk from here, marm. But ye'll need daylight to see it in, marm. We hain't got much to offer in our little place, marm, but, sitch as it is, if yer ladyship will be pleased to walk in, I guess we kin put ye up for the night, and make ye comfortable, and show ye over the field in the morning."

"I thank you," said the old countess, smiling again. "I will not trouble you much, monsieur, for I have slept in my carriage since ye be traveling; but, if you will permit me to partake of your supper with your family, I shall consider it a great favor."

"Sartinly, marm, sartinly," said John, heartily. "Walk right in, marm, and make yourself to hum. Here, Marian, child, come and help the lady."

As he spoke, Marian, somewhat curious, no doubt, came shyly out of the house, to help the grand stranger from her carriage. The old lady descended slowly, resting her hands, very small and beautiful still, on the gold crutch head of an ebony cane. The fingers were all covered with jewels, and, as she leaned on Marian to enter the house, she bore the appearance of a frail, delicate old lady of the proud noblesse of France, aristocratic to her finger-tips.

Marian was so shy and embarrassed at the presence of this imposing lady, that she hardly dared to look at her face for some time, and then she was called away by father and mother to attend to preparing supper, and that no light meal, but one for about a dozen persons. For it turned out that the countess had, besides herself and the two outriders, two more postillions, two footmen, and a smart French maid, Francoise by name, who insisted on helping "Mademoiselle Marian" with her preparations, and jabbering broken English to her, in praise of "dat dear comtesse, dat sweet comtesse," all the while.

Whenever Marian came near the countess, the latter professed to be enraptured with her, and confused her dreadfully with profuse compliments, all of which kept Marian too busy to examine the countess critically till after darkness had set in, and candles were lit. It was not till the dishes were washed and put away, and a hush had come on the little household, that the girl took an opportunity for a good, long look at her new friend. Something in the face seemed familiar to her, and yet she could not tell what it was. Before she could settle it in her own mind, the sharp black eyes of the old lady flashed a merry, wicked glance at her.

"Ah, my little cat!" said the countess, smiling; "so you would look at the old lady for a while, to see if you like her? Well, my child, they used to tell me I was pretty once, and I believed it, but no one calls me a pretty old lady any more now. Dat is all gone, just like your bloom vill fade some day, child, and you will be old and wrinkled like me. Monsieur Neilson, indeed, you have von very pretty little daughter dere—charmant, monsieur, charmant!"

"Marian is well enough, madam," said the mother, stiffly, "but she is not used to being flattered so much."

"Ah, ciel!" cried the French lady. "Is it possible? Why, madame, at her age I was called an angel fifty times a day by fifty different cavaliers, and I told them I believed them all. You must positively let me have dat little Marian in the carriage with me to-morrow, when we drive over the field of battle, Monsieur Neilson. Indeed, I am in love wid her."

"Sartinly, marm," said honest John, who was in high feather that night; and so it was arranged that the next morning Marian should go in the carriage with the countess, while her father rode alongside to explain the objects of interest.

And, that settled, they went to bed, and Marian's last thought being:

"Where have I seen the countess before?"

And she could not answer her own question.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 137.)

## Beat Time's Notes.

THEY say that out in the rural districts a man has to fan gnats now until he gets used to be a regular fanatic.

I ABOMINATE a slanderer like my wife abominates last month's fashions.

SHE was tired of life—wrote her husband a farewell letter, and tried to start the kitchen fire with coal oil: her name used to be Smith.

IF you wish to correspond with your deceased grandmother, send your letter through the dead-letter office.

THE noblest deeds are those which conserve property to you.

SOME people talk all the time—an empty box is always open.

IT seems to me that the crow is a very cautious bird.

THE man who followed his inclination went back on his dignity.

IF modesty was a sin, we would have to travel pretty far to find a sinner.

THE man who broke his word had it mended by a skillful spoke-mender.

IF new consciences were for sale to-day at noon all over the world, there would be no dinners eaten.

A WISE son maketh a glad father—foolishish very often.

WHAT is it which the less a man owns the more he has? Poverty. Right; sit down and eat your apple.

SOME lawyers' fee bills are not very fee-ble.

A MAN given to sin is liable to be reduced to a cin-der.

WORK is a most miserable little fourteen-letter horse power word of only four letters.

WHEN I asked my milkman this morning why it was he had so much water in his milk, he said he thought the cans hadn't been wiped very dry after they had been washed; told him I'd like to have what they call a little more milk in the water, if it did spoil the water.



# WHAT MR. BROWN THINKS AND WHAT HIS NEIGHBORS THINK.

BY JOE FOT, JR.

How blest am I! My neighbors think there's none like Mr. Brown. (Two heard his neighbors say he is the meanest man in town.) They look upon my honesty as something "most unusual." (Quite so, they say they cannot swear that Mr. Brown won't steal.) To do their best to honor me—I'm sure that each one tries. (They say if he had his debts Brimstone would take a rise.) That I'm a true man of my word they long have understood. (They say the same themselves, but add his word is never good.) They know me made of metal true whose like was ne'er before. (Myself have heard them intimate he is a splendid owner.) They know I live without a care, light-hearted is my laughter. (They say he's having more fun now than he will have hereafter.) They envy me my lordly ease and rest from worldly strife. (They say he is the laziest man that draws the breath of life.) And if from here I should depart their sorrows who could ease? (I've heard them say much a case they'd mourn his loss with pleasure.)

## Mohenesto:

### Trap, Trigger and Tomahawk.

BY HENRY M. AVERY.  
(MAJOR MAX MARTINE.)

II.—Trapping on Wind River. Trapping Beaver. "Signs." Food and Habits of the Beaver. Beaver Dams. Society among the Beavers. Superstitions of the Trappers. The Labor of Trapping. Tricks of the Beaver. Dress of the Trapper. A Strange Visitor. His Story.

The winter succeeding my escape from the Sioux, I was engaged in trapping upon the upper waters of the Wind river. Aside from the usual routine of setting traps, stretching furs, and hunting, there was nothing to relieve the monotony of life; and it was not surprising that my thoughts should often wander away to the little squaw I had left among the Teton Sioux. I must confess they were often thoughts of regret, and I was frequently tempted to return to the tribe.

For the information of those who desire to know, and especially for the benefit of the young enthusiast, who has read so many novels of hunter and trapper life that he is fully resolved to be a trapper himself, I will describe about what he will have to encounter, and some of the labor he must perform. Trapping in a down-east drawing-room, and trapping in the Mountains of the West are altogether different sports.

In trapping beaver, the first thing is to look for "signs." Now this word *signs* conveys but a vague idea of its all-important meaning, for it is by signs that the whole life of the hunter and trapper is governed. He has his "sign" of Indians, of deer, or bear, and of every living thing he expects to meet, and it is only by a strict examination of these signs that he is enabled to make his way through an Indian country—on the war-path, or in pursuit of almost any kind of game. The first lesson of the young trapper, therefore, must be to learn what signs are, that he may be enabled to find the haunts of any particular game. It rarely happens that the beaver can be seen, either on the river banks, or in the water; for nature has given him no powerful weapons with which to defend himself when surprised and attacked, but what is better, she has endowed him with the most sensitive eyesight and hearing, which enables the beaver to detect the approach of danger in time to escape.

The marks, or more properly, the "signs" which he leaves behind are, for a time at least, ineffaceable. These are only to be detected and used for his own purposes by the superior skill of the trapper. The untraced industry of gnawing down trees, and cutting twigs, peeling off the tender bark of the willow bushes, digging away banks, and carrying on their shovel-shaped tails the dirt, together with the innumerable footprints and sometimes dams, are some of the items which fill up the trapper's catalogue of "signs."

These signs may not always be found together, but instead, they may each exist separately, and thus inform the hunter that game is close at hand. The little twig as it floated down the stream with the bark half gnawed off, would go unheeded by the casual observer, but to the trapper it is a prize to be obtained; for, by its freshness it indicates to his mind how near he is to the chance of adding another pound of valuable fur to his stock on hand. To the trapper this simple event, or something similar, as for instance a fresh footprint, with its well defined claw-marks, molded in the damp mud or sand, is of more importance than the ingenious workmanship exhibited in the construction of a dam; for the dam may be an old one, and perhaps deserted, while the gnawed twig would be of such a recent occurrence that he could not be deceived.

It is a popular idea that beavers build their dams for the purpose of making a swimming pond in the vicinity of their residence; which is not true, for in every stream which he inhabits, if this was his sole object, he could select many natural places where the water is broad and deep, and without a ripple. The object of the animal is to provide against the pinching winds of hunger during the long winter, when every thing green has lost its sap and nutrition, and is as a body, without food and animation.

He therefore selects a place favorable for obtaining food, and also where his labors will be assisted by natural formations or accidents in the river's course and construction. Having selected the right place to build, he sets to work with his fellows and falls large trees. In this he again shows his wonderful instinct, for while one party are cutting with their sharp teeth the hard wood of one side of the tree, another division are just as actively employed on the other side, never forgetting to make, like a good wood-chopper, the lowest incision on the side the tree is to fall, which to suit their purpose is always directly into and across the stream.

When a tree is thus fallen, it is attacked in its branches, which are so turned and woven together in the outline of the dam, as to catch in their meshes any floating material, or receive the tail loads of soil and rubbish which they carry to it.

Another and another tree is then systematically fallen and arranged as was the

first, until the work is finished as completely as if it had been planned and executed by a reasoning mind. The finishing stroke is the transporting of the mud and laying it, and in this labor they show themselves to be excellent masons. They now act in concert, like so many "Heavenly Chimes" on a railroad grade. A large gang marches in a line to the bank, where they load each other's tails, and swim with their cargoes elevated above the water. When they arrive at an unfinished place in the dam, they dump the mud and mold it in its place.

Their houses they have previously built in the river banks. They consist of holes which lead into large and airy subterranean rooms, and which are above the water-mark. In these houses they sleep and live in pairs; and if all accounts are true, they imitate human beings in managing their households and in keeping house. The main object they have in staying the current of the stream is to afford a deep place where, having fallen numbers of trees, the deep water will preserve tender and fresh the limbs and shrubs on which to subsist during the present time, and also the time to come. It is well known that fresh bunches of trees and young willows, when placed in water, will keep up partial life for a long time. On this principle the beaver acts in submerging his food deep in the water where it will retain its verdure, and where the freezing process that is going on at the surface of the river will not hinder his efforts in getting at his store of provisions during the winter season. The beaver even goes so far, as to bundle up small branches of trees and willows, which he stows away in the muddy bottom of the river.

I have met with old trappers who insist that there are grades of society among beavers the same as among men; and they will have it that the beavers have their "head chiefs," and that often individual beavers roll in wealth, and that they have slaves who stand ready to do their master's bidding at a moment's warning; for instance, to bring them a bundle of green twigs on which to feast. According to their imaginative stories, the life of a beaver can not be rivaled in happiness; and if we could put full faith in their descrip-

stretched out, dried, cured and packed in small bales, whenever a sufficient quantity is obtained so to do with it.

The flavor of the meat of the beaver is not very palatable, and trappers seldom use it; never when they can get any thing better. But they are very partial to beaver-tails, which, when properly cooked, are a great delicacy. The business of trapping for beaver is no child's play. A person unaccustomed to it would probably look upon it as no very difficult task. A single trial is usually sufficient to satisfy the uninitiated on this point; for the beaver, above all other wild animals of America, is endowed with an extraordinary amount of instinct, as his habits and work will sufficiently attest.

It is a singular fact that, frequently, old beavers will be discovered springing the traps, by the aid of a stick. If discovered at his work, he seems to enjoy hugely the vexation of the trappers, which they sometimes exhibit. An old trapper, however, feels so much pride in the matter that he will cover up his vexation under assumed politeness, as if the beaver could understand and appreciate his language.

There are bands of Indians living in the North-west who really believe that the beaver has as much intelligence as an Indian; claiming that all the difference between a beaver and an Indian is, that the Indian has been endowed by the Great Spirit with power and capabilities to catch the beaver. Some of the stories which old mountaineers occasionally inflict upon an inquisitive traveler are somewhat startling; nevertheless, what the beaver really performs is truly astonishing, and the facts are very often stranger than fiction.

The trapper, when in full dress for an expedition, and especially after having been on one with his concomitant hair-breadth escapes, Indian and bear-fights, makes, to all appearances, a sorrowful figure. His extra wardrobe is meager in the extreme, yet it answers all his purposes, and he would have no other. When summed up, it will be found to consist usually of two pairs of moccasins, one of buck-skin pants, two woolen shirts (often made from an old blanket), a loose, fringed buck-skin coat,

himself, and thinking that, perhaps, there might be a sore spot in his heart, as well as in my own, I refrained from asking any questions.

I proposed that we go to sleep, and to this he assented, first asking, "Am I welcome?" I assured him he was, and we lay down. For a long time I was kept awake, thinking on the singularity of the occurrence, and wondering whether this waif of humanity was being waited; yet, more than all, wondering who this man could be who seemed my exact counterpart. While these thoughts were passing through my mind he threw off his blanket, and, sitting up, he looked at me for a moment, and seeing that I was awake, he asked: "Are you a Freemason?" I told him I was, and, without another word, he laid down and went to sleep.

In the morning I replenished the fire, and soon had a liberal supply of antelope steak on the coals, and waking him, invited him to eat. He remained with me about two months, and accompanied me in the spring (1869) to Fort Aspenhut, on the Sweetwater. He is now in Colorado, doing a thriving business. The story of his life was a common, though sad one; the old story of a man's love and a woman's inconstancy.

A year before he had been a resident of a small hamlet in Oswego county, N. Y., a happy husband and father. He was an artist by profession, but, from some misfortune or mismanagement, he had never prospered. He needed money; he was tempted, and he fell. The worst feature of the affair was that the temptation was offered by his most intimate friend, and that friend a brother mason! I pitied, but could not blame him. When, under the pressure of some sudden or seductive temptation, a man—a strong man, perhaps—goes down, the air is full of reproaches and marvels at his weakness or wickedness. Every one is sure he could have withstood the temptation, and talks volubly of what he should do in such and such cases, were he in such and such a place. Doubtless he is honest in his belief, for very few know themselves thoroughly. God pity them if they fall; their fellows will not.

All the bitterness of struggle, all the pas-

sion to a wife and establishment—well, it would not do for me."

Mr. Kenneth Mayfield was looking very seriously at the landscape at his side of the carriage, while Corey spoke.

"Yes, I really think it wouldn't do for you. You are hardly domestic enough in your feelings, while at the same time you have no right to go flirting about as you do, first this pretty face, then that."

Roselyn laughed lightly. "Such a sobersides as yourself is scarcely a judge in such matters, although I suppose even you will not disdain to attend Miss Elgin's reception at Viewlands—if you are honored—hello, there!"

All of a sudden the ponies he was driving shied at an unsightly stump on the roadside, and bounded frightfully forward.

There was a momentary flutter of a gray dress, a little scream, a fall, a scramble in the dust, and just as Kenneth Mayfield sprang to the ground to the rescue of the girl, Corey succeeded in reining in his ponies. "Confound the luck! Bonny Belle's—" but Kenneth's voice interrupted him.

"Never mind the horses now, Roselyn. We've nearly run over this young girl—you're sure you are not hurt in the least?"

And Kenneth turned solicitously toward her.

"Oh, not at all, only very much frightened."

It was not a beautiful face that was turned toward Corey Roselyn; there was too vivid a sunburn on the cheeks, and the hair too frowsy. Sundry blackberry stains on both face, dress and hands added to the general negligé of appearance—so Corey Roselyn turned his attention again to Bonny Belle.

"Come along, Ken," he said, after a moment or two, "it's getting on toward six. Where's the use fussing over a blackberry job? we'll come across scores of them, I'll warrant."

She shot him a sudden, piercing glance, then, before his own half-petulant eyes, dropped hers.

"Pert, into the bargain," he muttered. "Here, sis, take this quarter for the berries we've upset. Now come along, Ken."

The girl dropped a courtesy for the money, and with a little nod to Kenneth, crossed over the roadside into the path, and walked rapidly away.

It was a magnificent place, as Kenneth Mayfield had said, was "Viewlands," with its beauties of park and parterre, its miniature lakes and islands, arbors and summer-houses, shady dells and sunny glades; its fountains, marble-floored halls, its wide bay-windows, rare conservatories. And to-night, when Miss Elgin gave her first reception after her three years' tour in Germany, Viewlands was a perfect fairy land; and among the fairies, Gussie Elgin reigned queen supreme.

Few of her guests had ever seen her before, and among the gentlemen there was a perfect *furor*.

Such rare, *petite* beauty as Gussie Elgin's never was matched. She was the tiniest little thing, with a complexion the tints of wine-dashed snow. Eyes large and darkly blue, and short, wavy hair of pale, fleshy gold.

In her trailing white dress, with its pale pink moss roses, the only ornaments, Gussie Elgin was the fairest of the fair, and among all the hearts laid on her shrine at first sight, Corey Roselyn's might have been ranked first and foremost.

"Isn't she divine?" he whispered to Kenneth, as the two feasted their eyes on her spirituelle face.

"Divine!" echoed Kenneth, "she's an angel!"

"And I've succeeded in obtaining her hand for the third Lancers—don't you envy me? I tell you what it is, Ken, I'm going in for Viewlands and the charming proprieties, *entre nous*."

"Oh, Mr. Roselyn! I'm so glad you have come in time for a little chat before the dance. Shall we sit down by the window? Somehow you seem so like some one I met once before."

And the bewitching little lady leaned more heavily on his arm, and looked up into his face with the most captivating glances imaginable.

"I'm sure I never before had the delight of meeting you, Miss Elgin. If I had I should have improved it long before now."

"Yes!" and Gussie laughed lightly. "Oh, Mr. Roselyn, do tell me who that fine-looking gentleman is, yonder?—the one with the dark, serious eyes, and heavy beard. He was with you then—when you came this evening?"

A sudden little hesitancy in her speech; but Corey was too intoxicated to observe it.

"He—oh! that is Mr. Mayfield, I believe, a solemn sort of fellow—not at all your style, Miss Elgin."

"But I admire solemn gentlemen; especially when they are of sympathetic disposition. A kind word is more than money, Mr. Roselyn."

Somehow Corey wondered "what she was acting at," and he assented very gravely, "that indeed it was true."

"Then, Mr. Roselyn, take my advice and remember to practice it."

He bowed, utterly at a loss to follow her meaning.

"Really, Miss Elgin, though it is very pleasant for me to follow whatever course you dictate, I cannot imagine wherein I have erred."

She smiled, a little distantly, this time. "Will this jog your memory?" She held a twenty-five cent stamp before his eyes.

"The day I went blackberrying you gave it to me, and I shall keep it always. Now, will you introduce me to Mr. Mayfield?"

Corey Roselyn did not soon forget his lesson, and although still hunting for a rich wife, he takes care what he says to people, as he expects to come across a princess in disguise one of these days.

At Dunstable, Mass., in 1651, dancing at weddings was forbidden; in 1660 William Walker was imprisoned one month for courting a maid without the leave of her parents; in 1765, because "there is manifest pride appearing in our streets," the wearing of long hair or periwigs, "superstitious ribbons" was forbidden; also, men were forbidden to "keep Christmas, as it was a Popish custom." In 1677 a "cage" was erected near the meeting-house for the confinement of Sabbath-breakers, and John Atherton, a soldier, was fined forty shillings for wetting a piece of an old hat to put into his shoes.



"Doomed! Doomed! Yes, and with a curse hanging over my head!"

tions of the pastimes of the animal, his palaces and luxuries, we could only compare a beaver to a citizen of Venice in her most palmy days—the difference between the two being that the former enjoys himself more in the water than the latter did on his favorite gondola.

The beaver, when captured young, can be sufficiently domesticated to make him a pet; but their unattractive form is any thing but an ornament to the house. With young children they are very friendly, though their disposition is amiable to any one. They are very neat in their persons, and when moved from their comrades and domesticated with human beings, nothing do they so much like as being allowed the daily privilege of taking a clean bath. When thus engaged they are a curiosity to look at, as they are very agile and particular in removing every particle of dirt.

The signs having been discovered, the trapper next selects a suitable location for a camp, which he soon occupies. The trap used is very much like the same instrument used in different parts of the United States for catching foxes, wolves, etc., excepting that it is smaller and made with more skill. Old trappers are very superstitious in regard to the makers of their traps, and entertain the idea that much of their good and bad fortune depends on the tools they work with; hence they always have their favorite makers, and will pay more for their traps than for those of any other maker.

The setting of the trap requires experience and experience, or else it avails nothing; for the game to be caught is, as the reader can readily conceive, very wary, and his suspicions of there being any thing wrong near the instrument from view as much as possible; yet it must not be far from the surface of the water; and then again it must be firmly fixed in its position by being made fast to something that the beaver can not drag off.

The trapper while thus engaged is in the water. About his waist there is a strap to which is attached a pouch, in which is carried the bait; every thing being arranged, the trap is set and the bait applied, when the trapper notes the place where he has been at work so as to recognize it again, and then takes his departure to return early the following morning. The beaver, during this interim, is attracted by the peculiar scent of the bait, and as a reward for his curiosity, he generally is caught by one of his paws, and thus falls a prey to the hunter's pleasure. The bait most used among trappers is of a peculiar kind (*Amelium patris testiculum*). The traps, when visited, are relieved of the contents and set again. The game is put out of its misery and carried to camp, where it is skinned, and where all the pelts recently taken are

and an old slouched hat (usually made of some kind of skin with the fur on). His baggage, limited to a very small bundle, comprises his blankets, a buffalo-robe or two, a spare hide of dressed buck-skin, his extra garments above spoken of, not forgetting a liberal supply of tobacco, which is used in some form by nearly all trappers and mountain-men. These, with his camp-kettle and outfit of powder, lead, extra traps, scanty allowance of provisions, guns, pistols, horse and saddle, make up his traveling and working kit; it may be only for a few months or it may be for years.

But to return to my narrative. The winter passed away without bringing me a single visitor, either friend or foe, until when the snow began to melt on the hill-sides, and I was thinking what to do with my peltries, there stalked into my lodge a strange-looking man, who, without ceremony, sat down by the fire, and filling his pipe, commenced smoking as composedly as if he were at home. Neither of us spoke, and I took the liberty of looking him over. He was a young man, about thirty years of age; and the lines about his eyes showed much suffering, while the bronzed skin gave evidence of long exposure to the mountain winds. His dark brown hair and whiskers were nearly as long as my own, and by this I judged that a year must have passed since I had seen a white settlement. His dress was precisely like my own—a buck-skin suit, throughout. He was armed with a rifle of the same make as mine; a revolver and silver-handled hunting-knife were in his belt; and, as he sat smoking and looking into the fire, I could not repress an exclamation of wonder at the remarkable resemblance between him and myself.

The longer I looked at him the greater my wonder became, and when he had finished smoking and looked up at me, it was the wild, restless gaze of a maniac that met my sight. For a moment our eyes met, when, in a voice whose tones will be with me in my dying hour, he shrieked: "Doomed! Doomed! Yes, and with a curse hanging over my head! Oh, for the love of Jesus, tell me how long must this torture last!"

Surprise made me speechless, but, after this outburst of agony, his looks changed, and he seemed, almost instantly, to notice the remarkable resemblance between us.

With a smile, he said, "Do not be offended, stranger. I am a little wild sometimes, and it is no wonder; but tell me who you are and what you are doing here?"

I filled my pipe and told him the story of my life; how all I loved were dead; how, restless and weary of life, I had become a wanderer up and down the world, striving only to forget myself in the excitement and peril of a life in the wilderness.

He listened intently until I had concluded, when he said: "It might be worse." He did not volunteer to tell me any thing about

sionate depths of anguish and travail of spirit, and alas! all the fierce after-sting of remorse and regret, are quite lost sight of in the sweeping denunciations of those who have never been tempted. Shall we stand aside, rejoicing in our own strength and purity and inflexible virtue, thanking God that we are not as other men are; or, is there a more tender and Christly way for dealing with the erring?

This insane hunter, who first visited me among the bleak Black Hills, was one of the very few persons capable of compressing the happiness or misery of a lifetime into a few moments; and from what I have since learned of him, he was one who would suffer every thing rather than betray the trust reposed in him. So he gave up the wife and children he loved so well; gave up all the friends of his youth, and the love of a host of relatives, and resolved to seek a new home and new fortune in the Far West.

Those who should have been true deserters when the hour of trial came, and even the wife procured a divorce, and has probably found another mate ere this. His name was Skinner. Perhaps some of his acquaintances may read this chapter.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 129.)

## What a Stamp Bought.

BY MARY REED CROWELL.

"FINE place, a very fine place. I wouldn't object to a life interest in it—eh, Ken?"

"Not at all," laughed Kenneth Mayfield, "especially if the charming young owner of it all was thrown into the bargain."

"So the owner of Viewlands is a young lady?" and unmarried, if I interpret you aright, and interesting. There's a chance for me, Ken."

Corey Roselyn nodded his head toward the handsome estate they had just ridden by, and then replacing his cigar in his mouth, leaned languidly back in the phaeton. He was a tall, well-built young fellow, with an air of style and dash about him that many a young girl considered irresistible; a fair-haired, tawny-mustached gentleman, who twirled his cane and danced the *doux temps* to perfection.

Just now, attired in an immaculate suit of white linen, with tiny diamond studs, collar and sleeve-buttons, and a Panama hat, Mr. Corey Roselyn certainly deserved the reputation he had earned of being remarkably good looking and tasteful; at any rate, he himself thought so, if others didn't.

"So the mistress of Viewlands is single," he began again, half dreamily. "And that would suit me to a T. I tell you what it is, Ken, it's all very well for a fellow so long as he has only himself to support off twenty-five hundred a year, but when it comes